

“Lessons for Surviving”

Special Edition

Various Scriptures

The Rev. Ted Wood

May 13, 2022

Ted: The Lord be with you.

Brave Men: And also with you.

Ted: Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, we hear all very sad stories and discouraging stories about sickness and weakness and disability. We pray that You give us clear eyes to see that in the end in this world that’s where our lives are all headed. But at the same time we keep our eyes on You. You’ve promised that You would bring us to new life—resurrection from the dead—and make us into the new creation. And we pray this in Your name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Ted: Okay. *(Singing☺)*

“Whistle while you work.

Stevenson’s a jerk.

Eisenhower has the power;

Nixon is alert.”

How many of you know that?

Don Maurer: Did you make that up? *(Ted repeats the song)*

It’s 1956; the 1956 election. Dwight Eisenhower and his running mate Richard Nixon are competing with Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kiefauffer.

Sig Tragard: Who?

Ted: Estes Kiefauffer. I remember that tune. I remember a lot of tunes from my childhood and that’s one of them.

The Democratic party in its primary had a number of candidates that were seeking to be nominated to run against Eisenhower. And they included John Kennedy—the young John Kennedy, Al Gore, Sr., and Hubert Humphrey. All of these were attempting to get the Democratic nod in 1956.

But Adlai Stevenson did, and he won the nomination from the Democratic party based on the platform of reducing military spending--remember, it had been just a few years since the Korean War--, having an all-volunteer army, and increasing spending for social programs.

Eisenhower had a heart attack in his first term in office. And it was thought that perhaps he was not well enough at age 66 to run for office. *(Laughter)*

It was the last election in which Minnesota and Massachusetts had both gone Republican. That hasn’t happened since. It was the first time there were TV debates. During the primaries the Democratic candidates debated. There wasn’t a Presidential debate but there was a primary debate.

Sig: There wasn’t television prior to—

Ted: It was the early stages of television. It’s the first time that TV ads were used extensively to get the political message across.

In the previous election which Eisenhower had won, the Republicans had benefited from a large turnout of women voters. And so TV ads were aimed at housewives. And if you were to look at some of them today, as I did, they look like another time and another era; it was 66 years ago.

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Eisenhower won 457 electoral votes to 73 votes for Stevenson.

Brave Men: Wow!

Ted: Eisenhower was a very popular President. A lot of things have changed in 66 years, haven't they?

It seems to me that especially in the last decade or so, we've had wave after wave of incomprehensible social, political and cultural shenanigans that have actually overwhelmed me as I think about it. We've had huge political turmoil, regardless of the positions of the political party you stand on. I think there's a huge loss of civility. It's not okay for a candidate to tell another candidate in a TV debate that they ought to be jailed. It may be true, but it's just not civil. We may be in the right. But if we can't talk in a civil way to one another that is very disturbing.

I voted for Donald Trump the second time around. I don't think I'd vote for him again. It is just too much drama, and I'm not interested in it. So there's that problem.

Then there's the whole COVID thing, right? I was listening to KDKA driving over to the Bible study. And there is now talk about re-doing all the restrictions! I mean, doesn't it feel great to get out and to be in public without wearing masks and worrying about all that kind of thing?

A huge amount of fear was generated, warranted or unwarranted, during that period. I have family members, friends and colleagues at work that are full of fear, and even now are very fearful to go outside and be in public.

Then you have the whole race thing. And everything I'm mentioning is very real. And it strikes me once again as wave after wave—the whole race thing.

I have no problem saying that I'm a racist; I am. I'm also a blasphemer. I'm also a coveter. I'm also an adulterer. I'm also a thief; I'm a liar. Also I did not honor my father and mother—all those things.

I don't know why people have a problem saying, “I'm a racist.” Generally they want to say, “Well, you're a racist.” And I say, “Well yes; tell me something I don't know. I'm a very wicked person deep down inside. I just want to know what you want me to do with it.”

At the church we go to we have an assistant pastor who has since left. He gave a talk about race and about the problems of race and about the things that white folks have done bad in the past. I'm free to talk about these things. Jeff has to be here every Friday; I'm just here occasionally, so I can get away with it. But he talked about race. And he said that what we need to do is listen, learn and act from what we know about the things that we have done racially in the past that were evil.

So I went and saw him. And I asked the pastor. I said, “I get your message; I understand it completely. I have no problem admitting my guilt. I have no problem admitting my guilt, and you shouldn't either, even if it happened a long time ago. But I want to know how I'm supposed to act.

I've listened, I've learned. I'm a historian; all I do is read this stuff. I said, “Please, pastor, tell me what I'm supposed to do.” And his answer was to tell me more about all the bad things that happened.

And so I get it; I understand it. Don't insult me. I study this stuff; I've studied it for decades. But what should I do? He really didn't have an answer.

So then we're stuck, aren't we? Guilt, shame, but we don't know what to do about it.

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Then there’s the whole gender thing that came along. Are you guys wondering where I’m going with this? (*Laughter*) I want to lay it on you heavy to begin with. (*Laughter*)

The gender thing. I don’t think the Christian church has responded well to this. I don’t think we’ve given a good answer. And so the society wins out.

I have young family members who won’t come to church because they think that Christians hate gay people. That’s simply not true. But we’ve lost the battle there, especially with the generation that’s come along since the 1980s and the 1990s.

Then there is the Russian/Ukraine war. It’s terrible; this should not be happening in 2022! We’re more civilized than that!

And then there’s the whole social media thing. Jonathan Haidt is a very well-known psychologist. He’s a very interesting fellow. He’s an atheist and he’s quite conservative. And he charts the whole confusion in the mind of the culture from the time that social media became a big thing. And I think he dates it to 2010 or ’12 or ’08; I can’t remember the exact date.

From the 1960s until the year 2000—and the Gallup polls have charted this—church membership—not that this says whether people are believers or not—church membership stayed about 72 or 68%. If you look at the chart it kind of goes like this. Starting in the year 2000 church membership plummeted from 70% to this year at 47%. Brothers, that’s a dramatic drop!

Sig: You mean 40% of the population?

Ted: 47% of the population are church members, versus everything from 1940 to the year 2000.

So it’s a time full of drama, fear, and actually demonic thinking.

I was listening to a debate the other day on video between Michael Knowles; you may know him. He’s a conservative commentator, a Christian—I think he’s a Catholic—and an abortion activist named Bronte Remick. And Bronte is a four-year medical student, very articulate. But so is Michael Knowles.

And I picked up the last minute of the debate. It was a short debate, about fifteen minutes. And I’m just going to read to you what was said.

Michael Knowles said this to Bronte. “It boils down to what is the body for? Is sex for the individual pursuit of pleasure, or for a baby—something beyond our own desires?” What is sex for? Is it something beyond our own desires?

Bronte responded, “Your body is whatever you want it to be used for. That is the basis of consent and bodily autonomy. You cannot decide for another what that person’s body is used for. That is the root of the pro-choice stance.”

Knowles’ response: “What about the body of the baby?”

Bronte responds: “When the baby lacks autonomy and it requires the body of an autonomous person in order to live, that autonomous person can exercise their bodily autonomy and at any point to consent or not to consent to support the possible life.”

And I see this. I see this in conversations I have with people who should know better. And I see it in conversations especially with younger adults, that there really is no truth or reality beyond what I say it is. In the abortion debate bodily autonomy is what I want it to be. And that’s the only thing that counts. I see almost a disparagement, a mocking, of any other position that says that there is a standard beyond you and me. There’s something much deeper than that. It’s not just what I want.

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And so that’s what we face today. So as I’ve described it, the world has come to a different place. In the old days people would say, “Well, isn’t it the same always?” In the old days, when I was younger, we would say, “Yeah; those old fogies don’t know anything. You know, they’re square. We can kind of go off and do some wild stuff.” But we didn’t ultimately reject the basic assumptions of what was important and valuable in life. And that’s what’s happened now. So we’ve entered a whole new era. The whole understanding of the purpose of life, and my purpose, have been jettisoned as we understand it, and a new way accepted.

I think I’ve told this story. I’m almost inspired by the story of Augustine—St. Augustine of Hippo. He lived during the end of the Roman era. He lived in North Africa which was a very active and vital center for the Roman culture and Christianity. He wrote *The Confessions*. He wrote a lot of other things. He was very influential for the Reformers, especially for Luther. Luther was very influenced by Augustine because of Augustine’s emphasis on the sovereignty and election of God. I think Augustine was exactly right.

But he was living in Hippo when the Barbarians crossed into the Roman Empire. And they moved further south. now remember, he’s in North Africa. They’re coming down from Germany. This is in the second half of the fifth century.

And the particular group of the Barbarians that were headed toward North Africa were called Vandals. We get our word “vandalize” from that because they were terrible in terms of their slaughter and mayhem. And the people of the area gathered into this town of Hippo which was near Carthage to seek refuge and to be saved from the invaders who were destroying and killing.

I’m reading from a history of Augustine’s life written shortly after he died. Augustine was the bishop; he was the head church leader in Hippo. And he kept ministering to his flock. It says, *“Up to the very moment of his last illness Augustine preached the word of God incessantly, vigorously and powerfully, with a clear mind and solid judgment. He made no will because as a poor man of God he had nothing from which to make it. He repeatedly ordered that the library of the church and all the books should be carefully preserved for future generations. Shortly after that the walls of Hippo were breached by the Vandals and the people were slaughtered.”* Augustine missed it because he died, probably of a plague or illness, in that besieged city that had been besieged for fifteen months.

So why was it important to Augustine that the library be preserved? He preached fearlessly; he did not panic. He was preparing his people for what would happen after the end came. At the end of civilization, when all the assumptions, all the virtues that had been propagated by the Christian faith had come to an end in his part of the world, why do you think he wanted that library preserved? Give me some thoughts. He said, *“Above all, make sure they keep the books.”* Yeah; go ahead.

Brave Man: So all of that wouldn’t have been lost?

Ted: Right, because the Barbarians would have had none of that. It was going to be great darkness. So he said, “When all is collapsed, keep the books; keep the library. And remember God.” So any thoughts so far? I’m going to get into the Bible study. Go ahead, Don.

Don Maurer: I’m probably getting ahead of you, and you can interrupt me and—

Ted: Sure.

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Don: But talking about autonomy and everything like that, the way our society is, isn't it just because we've jettisoned and marginalized the whole concept of the need for God? There is no God; there is no transcendent Being. We're just material; we can thank Darwin for that. We're just material; we're just chemicals fizzing in a glass. So whether it's war or abortion or the gender issue or whatever, we can really do what we want.

Ted: Right. But I don't think Dr. Darwin was responsible for that. I think it started in the Garden. “You will not die, but you will become like God, knowing good from evil.” I mean, it started right there. It's easy to point the finger and say that there are forces out there making us do this. They're not making us do this; we're cooperating quite willfully.

Don: Yes; that's true.

Ted: I mean, we wouldn't be in the situation we had been had we been paying attention to what the message from the church was that was going out. And we've accommodated to the culture. And now the culture comes and says, “We have a new rule; we have a new value; we have a new morality. And we can make sense of it. You can make sense of it because you're full of hate. We have a better morality than you have.” And that's the situation we face. I think it's quite dramatic. I think that statistics show that we're headed into a very dark time.

As I taught Exodus in our church, (I taught it for a year-and-a-half, and we just finished chapter 40 last week), I was trying to draw some lessons from the first three chapters of Exodus as to how we ought to think, like Augustine who was preaching to his people. Outside are the Vandal armies. They're besieging the city, probably in the city. There's hunger, there's thirst; the plague is breaking out. That's always what happens in besieged cities.

And Augustine starts to preach. And he preaches to stay faithful to God's word and to focus on that, and not the Vandals that are outside the walls. I'm sure he did not preach out of Exodus. But what are some of the lessons we can learn from those first three chapters of Exodus to help us survive and thrive beyond the collapse of the world as we know it?

Well, the first one I had here is: *God starts small, weak and insignificant.* That's how God always starts. Exodus chapter 1 verse 1: “*These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family. ... The descendants of Jacob numbered seventy in all.*” That's all there were; those are God's people.

This is a continuation of the story that began in Genesis 48:8. “*These are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his descendants who went into Egypt.*”

And Exodus 1:1 points to the promise that was made to these who went into Egypt in Genesis 12. “*The LORD had said to Abraham, ‘Go from your country to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation. I will bless you; I will make your name great.’*” And the promise then continued into Egypt in Genesis 46:2. “*God spoke to Israel. ‘I am the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation.’*” Once again the promise of making God's people a great nation.

And it was confirmed in Egypt. Exodus 19: “*You shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.*” And that same promise is continued in the New Testament. “*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*”

And it continues into eternity. “*Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?*” That's in 1 Corinthians, the sixth chapter. So God's people start weak, small and

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insignificant. And we may become great in the eyes of the world. And there are periods in history where the church has been very great in the eyes of the world. But in fact, though we may look great and strong and good in the eyes of the world, we still remain in fact weak, small and insignificant.

I’m reminded of that great passage in 1 Corinthians the first chapter. *“Brothers and sisters, think what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many of you were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong, so that no one may boast before Him.”*

It was reiterated by Jesus in Mark 4. *“Jesus said, ‘What shall we say the kingdom of God is like? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all the seeds on earth. Yet when planted it grows and becomes the largest of garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.’”* And again in Luke the ninth chapter: *“It is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”*

And then in 2 Corinthians: *“For Christ’s sake I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

So if we’re fearful of losing our strength in this world and our power and our position and our influence, I guarantee you, that’s where we’re headed, because that’s our fate. And in fact that greatness, the greatness that was promised to Israel and to us, is only going to be seen within the church, not outside of the church.

The great danger, as God makes His people great for the great things of God is that His people adopt the world’s ways. This is the danger: they adopt the world’s ways to remain great. And we adopt an attitude that says that the end justifies the means.

So for instance, in church we talk about the benefits of having Jesus as your Savior. And a lot of them have to do with earthly living. We’re not focused on the things of eternity in our teaching. You can be a better husband, a better worker, a happier person, finding meaning and purpose in life, if you’ll accept Jesus.

But it goes way beyond that. The world likes those messages. But they don’t like the message of the lost condition of mankind—that they’re dead in their sins and trespasses, that there is no other Savior except Jesus Christ. All the rest are liars; they’re cheats and thieves. The world doesn’t like that message at all. And there will be a great distinction made between God’s people and the rest of the people of the world. And they end up saying, “I don’t like your message. I want you to speak well of all people. And make things look good for me.”

In the end the church will always be small, weak and insignificant in the eyes of the world. So that’s the first message I get from Exodus. They ended up small, and in the eyes of the world they were small. But God made them great from where we are today.

The second thing that we learn from Exodus is that *I can’t count on this world*. I’ve been struck by Exodus the first chapter. It says, *“Then a new king to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. So they put the slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor.”*

The problem was that Jacob went into Egypt with a very small number; they were very weak. But God promoted Joseph. They gave him a great position. David Raul, in his book about the Exodus, indicates that he thinks he has found this person in Egyptian history—a great and prominent Egyptian leader. But in the end those who trusted in the world, who took on the world’s things, they ended up being enslaved. All the Israelites

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were enslaved. And the world did nothing; the Pharaoh’s favor meant nothing at that point.

But in the end we can count on God. We can’t count on the world, but we can count on God. It says in Genesis 50 that *“God will surely come to your aid, and take you up out of this land of Egypt, to the land He promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”* That’s God’s promise: that He would come to our aid. The aid and the promise and the fulfillment of the world, He indicated that it would disappear. So we need to remember that.

Anything we attempt to do politically to make things right in the society today, won’t enfold in us. We need to trust what God has promised that He will do.

The third thing is *to trust God to make things right in the end.* We’re always trying to make things right. That’s what the world does; it tries to make things right on its terms. Exodus 1:22: *“Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”*

All the firstborn Egyptian children were killed. But in the end God had the final say, because God took and turned the tables on the Egyptians. What the enemies of God’s people bring upon God’s people will turn on them; we’ve seen this throughout history. So by Exodus 11 *“every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh who sits on the throne to the firstborn son of the female slave who is at her handmill. Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.”*

I love David’s principle that he stated. *“Who can lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?”* Or remember the promise in Genesis 12:3: *“I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you.”*

So that’s one of the things we hope for. I hope for justice to be done. But it needs to be done on God’s terms, not on my terms or on my group’s terms. We need to trust that God will turn the tables on those who come and fight against us and seek our destruction.

And finally we need to remember that Moses is like us. We’re a man without a country. We have a lot to be proud of by being Americans. We have a tremendous heritage—the whole phenomenon in the late 18th century of the Founding Fathers that came down—their thinking, their way of sorting out government and the rights of people. It was never seen in human history; it was absolutely phenomenal. I think it was probably a God thing.

But I don’t have any confidence that God will preserve America into the future, because in the end you and I are just without a country; we are without allegiance. We are like Moses.

Exodus the second chapter: *“Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.”* And just remember that the Midianites were the descendants of Abraham and his second wife Keturah. That’s an obscure thing that you might want to remember.

So he was actually going to relatives when Moses went into Egypt. And then it tells us that some shepherds came along—the Midian priests--and drove away Jethro’s daughter. *“But Moses got up and came to their rescue, and watered their flocks.”*

So Moses became a shepherd of the flock of Israel. Moses was tending the flock of Jethro. And then David became a shepherd. *“You will be a shepherd of My people Israel, and you will become their ruler.”*

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Then Jesus became a Shepherd. *“I am the Good Shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me, and I lay down My life for the sheep.”*

And always The Lord is the Shepherd.

“The LORD is my Shepherd;

I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.”

So the question is, if the model is to be like the Shepherd and the flock, where does the Shepherd reside? Where does the Shepherd live? What country is the shepherd’s country? Christians are called foreigners and exiles. The Shepherd and His flock are to be aliens and strangers in the land. Christians are like the Good Shepherd. *“He was in the world, and the world did not recognize Him,”* and *“His own did not receive Him.”* That’s our situation.

It tells us in Exodus the second chapter that *“Zipporah gave birth to a son.”* Zipporah was Moses’ wife. *“And Moses gave him the name Gershom, saying, ‘I have become a foreigner in a foreign land.’”*

The eleventh chapter describes it in this way. We are like sheep. *“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land, like a stranger in a foreign country.”*

Why are those who live by faith, why are we by definition aliens and strangers in this world? Why are we who live by faith like Abraham did in Hebrews 11, why are we called *“aliens and strangers?”* Why would that be a name given to those of us who live by faith? What do you think? Yes; go ahead.

Don Rimbey: Because we’re members of Jesus’ kingdom and not of this world.

Ted: That’s correct. But why is “by faith” critical? Why are we aliens and strangers by faith? Why does that separate us out from the rest of the world? Go ahead.

Rich Clark: Because God has called and chosen us.

Ted: Right; that’s correct. I’m looking for something by faith. What is it, Don?

Don Bishop: Because everyone lives by the material, by what they see, by what they feel and everything else.

Ted: Yes, right.

Don: We live by what we can’t see.

Ted: Yes. The Lord said, “Blessed are those who believe but haven’t seen.” Mike?

Mike Davis: What’s going through my mind is that by faith we look forward to the kingdom of heaven. We have the promises of God. We look forward to the kingdom of heaven by the promises of God. We don’t see that; we don’t have it in front of us. But it is by what is in our hearts that we are part of what is yet to come.

Ted: Yes, amen.

Mike: That’s by faith.

Ted: Right. And one of those great lines in Exodus; I’ve got it here someplace. It says, *“And God said, ‘I will make a distinction between you and the Egyptians.’”* And the distinction is that the world lives by sight and we live by faith. We live by faith in what? The promises of God, right?

We live by faith in how God describes our situation. When God says we are aliens and strangers, we are like sheep. We’re like a shepherd who must go from one pasture to the

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next. He really doesn't care if he has a country or not. He's just looking for the next pasture for his sheep.

And we live by faith that that's real. And we live by faith that God in the end will make things right. Not only are their children not killed by the Pharaoh, but God will kill the Pharaoh's children. We live by faith in those things.

And this is the situation in our life today and in our culture, that we need to live by faith. Things are very discouraging on the outside. But God tells us to trust Him to do great things in the future. Mike?

Mike: You know, with all these things you've been talking about, we can go into great despair with all of that.

Ted: Yup.

Mike: But in everything we've talked about—every cultural shift we've seen, every change,—the mission of the church has not changed one little bit.

Ted: Yeah.

Mike: And our job as believers in Christ has not changed even a little bit. What's going on around us has not changed our mission.

Ted: Yes; exactly right. And that's why I'm so inspired by Augustine's story. You know, he could look over the walls of the city of Hippo and just see absolute destruction; there was no hope. It was the steamroller of the Vandals and the Barbarians, and they were going to take over in the end. But he kept preaching the message. And in time the Vandals who were pagans, in time missionaries were sent to them and they became Christians. Things flipped around.

The Vandals came into North Africa saying, “We're going to take everything we see, and we're going to suppress Christianity.” And in the end Christianity had the final say; the gospel had the final say. Yeah; go ahead.

Rich: Weren't the Vikings also, Ted?

Ted: Absolutely true for the Vikings; absolutely right, yes. And true throughout the world. It's true of my own ancestors, Anglo-Saxons. They all came and they were pagans. They killed all the monks in the monasteries; they came in and destroyed the churches. But then there was this porky guy Patrick in Ireland who generated another second generation of missionaries. And they started to go from Ireland into the British Isles. And people were saved and converted, and England became a Christian nation. But then again England went downhill, and it's just a big cycle that goes on and on.

I feel that it hasn't been overly thrilling today, but these are my thoughts. Any other thoughts? Yes, please.

Bob Busted: I'm a little troubled here.

Ted: Good. *(Laughter)*

Bob: When I try to correlate what you said earlier about your own life, I assume you were being truthful in that earlier statement. And then—

Ted: Would you like me to go into detail?

Bob: Pardon me.

Ted: Would you like me to go into detail?

Bob: Oh, no, no. And then leaping ahead to the other side, you say that it's all about faith.

Ted: Yes.

Bob: I'm inclined to want to argue a bit and say that it goes beyond faith.

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Ted: Okay.

Bob: If we are Christians then we are to read the Bible; we are to pray. It sounds like we are to gradually improve and be like God—to be like His 28 attributes, etc. And so there’s a mission there. There’s a responsibility, that we shouldn’t be like your earlier description of yourself.

Ted: Yes.

Bob: We should be people that are trying constantly to make change in some way. You say the question is what should we do?

Ted: Yeah.

Bob: Well, by example we should do good things because we know good from evil. But we should joyfully change, which progressively move us a little bit closer to God in His examples.

Ted: Mm-hmm.

Bob: So we have a real responsibility. I should try not to sin as much. I should try to be a good neighbor and a good friend to many.

Ted: Right.

Bob: And I should love my family and my wife and my children, and my cousins and my grandchildren—

Ted: Yes, yes, yes! All those things—yes, yes, yes, yes!

Bob: So I guess I’m troubled by the chasm and the great gap between who you said you are, and this business about faith and our responsibilities as a Christian. I’m sorry—

Ted: No, that’s okay; I would not deny it. Let me ask you a question. Everything you said I would not deny. But I would ask you this question. If it’s all about improvement—and you’ve seen me do this before and I apologize for saying it,—but when you were born again, when you were regenerated, in terms of your behavior and attitude, if you started here, how far do you think you’ve gotten? I mean if Christ is the perfection, if that’s the model that we’re to follow after, and you started here, tell me how far you’ve gotten.

Bob: Well, that’s all relative, except that I would say this, and I’ll make this personal now.

Ted: Yes; please do.

Bob: I would say that I hadn’t made much progress at all in my opinion until I got involved with the Brave Men and Bruce’s teaching, and the in-depth study that we now have with Jeff.

Ted: Yes.

Bob: So if I were looking at a graph I would say that the first sixty years kind of went along with just a minor adjustment. And then I think it has made reasonable progress in the last twenty years.

Ted: Okay.

Bob: But it’s still a long way to perfection.

Ted: Okay.

Bob: Okay.

Ted: Well, that’s good; I appreciate it. Go ahead; thank you.

Sig: I have to go with Bryan first.

Ted: I was not denying that you should do all those things. I was speaking more to the situation we’re facing now and what our attitude should be.

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Bob: Your first statement, though, just made me feel like there’s no hope here; we’re all in really deep trouble, and there’s nothing we can do about it.

Ted: We’re all in deep trouble and there’s nothing I can do about it. But there is plenty that God can do about it.

Bob: Well, we know that God can do a tremendous amount of things. But I think we were put on this earth to do certain things, and I think we have a great responsibility.

Ted: Right; that’s good. Okay, fine.

Bryan Whittington: So to that end, not saying that you have any control—

Bob: I can’t hear you.

Ted: Me too.

Bryan: *“Neither the sexually immoral, nor adulterers, nor idolaters, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor the thieves, nor the greedy, nor the drunkards, nor the revilers, nor the swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Ted: Yes.

Bryan: *“And such were some of you.”*

Ted: Yeah.

Bryan: *“But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*

Ted: Yeah.

Bryan: It’s God. It’s not what we do; it’s from God.

Ted: Yes.

Bryan: And it’s pointing to people who are so desperately lost, and they’re not understanding the travesty that they’re getting into, with the 50% suicide rate and everything else. And even as Christians we can be included in sitting on the sidelines and not speaking out about God. And I think that’s where—

Ted: That’s good. Yes?

Caleb Falbo: It strikes me that if we were to look at our world and say, “Who’s in charge?”, like you said, we look to the politicians. But when Jesus gave the Great Commission He said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go.”*

Ted: Yes.

Caleb: And that’s the contrast with faith and sight.

Ted: Right.

Caleb: I mean, if we were to look at the world we wouldn’t necessarily say that Christ is in charge, right? I wonder if you have anything to say to that.

Ted: I like it; that’s right. By sight it does not look like God is reigning. But by faith we believe He is. And then God witnesses to us in what? Through circumstances and others we see miracles happen in people’s lives. And we say, “I guess God is in charge here.” But He has told us to trust Him by faith in that. Gary?

Gary: I was going to say that I used to work for a hard-core atheist. And atheists do not believe that you can change. And certainly he did not change because he wouldn’t consider anything else. He already had his mind made up, and that’s fine with him. And that’s what I’m hearing. There’s no forgiveness. If at one time you were an atheist or a racist, you’re canceled because they don’t believe that you can change. And that’s written into CRT and all these other things. And they would not acknowledge that people change.

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Ted: Yes. But before we point the finger at them, let’s remember that we do the same thing. I mean, how many times does a brother fall and we’re eager to welcome him back in if he shows some repentance? He has to do something to prove it. I mean, we do the same kind of thing. So I kind of basically say this. That is extreme, but we do the same thing. Yes?

Gary: But at least we’re for change. You know, almost everybody I know has changed. But no, he won’t listen to that. He just won’t admit that it’s possible.

Ted: I didn’t hear who that was you were talking about. Who is the “he” you are talking about?

Gary: The guy I used to work for.

Ted: Okay, I got you; right.

Gary: The atheist.

Ted: Yeah, right.

Sig: I have a question for you. I know we’re getting late. It almost seems like you’re pulling it out to me—at least I’m getting from this—that maybe the Christian church within America has gotten the wrong idea or the wrong goal, because America wants to grow and be big and be great and dominant. And we feel that the church has to do that. Numbers are more important than depth and quality. Like Bob was saying, well yeah, I’m grouped. But we want to get numbers; we want to fill a hall; we want to have more people. *“Go and make disciples of all nations.”* Well yeah, get the word out. But it doesn’t necessarily mean that everyone’s going to follow.

Ted: Yeah.

Sig: And yet we have this pressure or this goal to get more. It’s like your family. This is how we live; this is what we do, which may be more important than everybody in the whole town following Christ. Let’s tell them about Christ. But I almost feel like we’ve got to do it around a web of—

Ted: Well, the United States of America is an extremely unbelievably blessed country, unlike any in the history of the entire world. We have more prosperity and more benefits and more freedoms than anybody in the whole world has ever had. And what that does is that begins to lull us into the assumption that we get these things from the world, that the world and the political system and the economic system is the thing that gives us all of this. And we like it a lot, because humans by nature go for comfort rather than stress. And America is a very comfortable country to live in.

I mean, we lived in England. And when we went in the early ‘90s there was a lack of service. And we were so grateful for the service-oriented mentality of Americans. We went to buy a sandwich in a shop. My wife was a vegetarian at that time, and they had a ham sandwich with cheese. She wanted a cheese sandwich.

Some of you have heard me tell this story. I said, “I would like a ham and cheese sandwich.” I said this to the young woman behind the counter who was about to make the sandwich. “And my wife would like a cheese sandwich.”

“Well, we don’t have a cheese sandwich up there.”

I said, “Okay. Can you just make a sandwich and not put the ham on it?”

And the woman said back to me, “I don’t know; I’ll check with the manager.”

(Laughter)

And I said, “I will pay you for two ham sandwiches. Just don’t put the ham on one.” And she had to leave. She was gone for a little while and she came back, and she said that

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she could do it. So I'm not in America. You know, give me a Subway sandwich. We're used to our economic system being set up to be very service-oriented rather than process-oriented. And that woman was process-oriented. She could not get me a cheese sandwich, even though there was the cheese and the bread sitting right there.

So it's very seductive. We live in a time that's very seductive, and it makes us want to accommodate to it. I'll just have to stop it here; we can talk afterward. But God bless. Take care. And grace and peace to you. *(Applause)*