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Acts 6:1-8 "Attacked Again"

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"...and we've come to spend the time with you. And we've enjoyed the music, the prayers, the offering appeals and the video, and all that is going on, we've enjoyed all of it. But Lord, we are now about to open Your word and nothing, nothing will happen unless You teach us. And so Heavenly Father, we are pleading that You will be the One who speaks to our hearts and to our mind. You will be the One who challenges us and gives us courage and gives us hope. We pray Heavenly Father to have an experience in righteousness as You teach us. We pray that our hearts will be changed, our lives will be changed and miracles will take place. We ask all this in Jesus name, amen."

When I was in the coast guard, one of the places I was stationed was Duluth, Minnesota. It was a small boat station. I was an engineman there, and one of the boats that we had, a small craft, it was a 40 foot boat, and it had a crew of 3 men. You had a coxswain which was an individual that drove the boat, you had a seaman which was the person running around crazy, doing all the stuff that the coxswain said to do, and then you had the engineman. And the engineman's job was to make sure that the engine and all the working parts of the boat were working, and that was my job. I was an engineman. And we received a call that we had to go on a patrol. I can't remember exactly what we were supposed to do or where we were supposed to go, but I do know that we had a check list that we always went through. And some of these things were done prior to getting a call, so that if there was an emergency, we would just jump in the boat and go.

But basically we had a list. We would make sure that the equipment was secured properly to the boat in case we got out into some rough water, and that we had right equipment on board for what we needed to do. We had to make sure that we had enough fuel, enough oil for the engines and that the engines themselves were running well. We had to make sure of our course, where we were going, and our objective, what we were going to do when we got there. We had to make sure that we were properly clothed. There on Lake Superior we had to wear these very thick neoprene suits because the water is so cold; even in the summer it's so cold. And in the spring and in the fall, we had hats and gloves that we had to wear as well. We had to make sure we had proper clothing. We had to make sure that the radio was working; the lights were working, and on and on went this list, a very good list, a very important list.

When we were out on that journey, the boat caught on fire. It was my job to put the fire out. Now it was a good list, but that list was not what I needed at the time. In fact, if I had begun to go through that list, and check on whether the equipment was secured, and the radio was working and we had fuel and oil, and knew where we were going and what we were going to do and you know, if I went through that list at that time, what was good would have destroyed me and the other two men that were there. You see, that is a principle that Satan is working on. He is trying to destroy you by the good. And I'd like to study that with you today in the Word of God.

Acts chapter 6, we are going to read 8 verses in this chapter, we are going to read from the New King James Version of the Bible. "Now in those days when the number of disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the

disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people."

Luke has included this story in his account for a special reason. We are going to look at it. It's kind of an interesting story, and what we must understand is that it takes place probably 3 years or more after the resurrection of Jesus. So a lot is happening in a short expression here in the Word of God. It's you know, the Word of God is written in economy of words to give us the bigger picture. And so, one of the questions we'll have to deal with is: "Why is this story included?" You know, "What's the significance of the story?" It says in verse one that "The number of disciples was multiplying." You have the 12 who are called apostles. They had actually walked with Jesus, and then everybody else that began to be a believer and to follow Jesus, were called disciples. And so the number of disciples was multiplying.

I think that's fantastic. Wouldn't it be fantastic to say of our church, "We didn't have anybody added last year, they multiplied!" You know, I mean that is so much bigger. But it says, "There arose a murmuring." A murmuring! Now the word used for murmuring here in the Greek is the same word used in the Septuagint. Many of you know that the Septuagint is the Old Testament, written in Greek. 70 scholars about 100 years before Jesus wrote the Old Testament into Greek, and it's called the Septuagint. And so there Luke, studying the Septuagint, looking for a word to use to describe what was happening here, says, "The murmuring..." and he quotes the same word used to describe the children of Israel when they are out there in the wilderness complaining about Moses, and complaining to God. And in fact, it cost them their salvation, that's what's happening now here in the church.

Hold your hand here and look in Acts 4. In Acts 4 an earlier account of what was happening in the church; in Acts 4 verse 32 it says: "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need." What a beautiful picture! A sweet fellowship where anybody who had needs it was okay. Things were brought to the apostles and the apostles distributed those things to who ever had need. They were of one heart, of one soul, but now, just a short time later, we come to Acts 6 and there is a murmuring, a complaining, and the sweet fellowship of the Christian church is being threatened.

Well what was the problem? It says here in verse 1 that there was murmuring against the Hebrews by the Hellenists because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. There were Hebrew Jews and there were Greek Jews. That's what it means - Hellenists. They were Greek Jews. They were people that lived all around the Mediterranean which was highly influenced by Greek culture, thought, ideas and language. And they were just as much Jewish as the people who lived in Jerusalem. But the people who lived in Jerusalem and the surrounding territory of Galilee and all the country of Israel -- the people who lived in the country of Israel thought themselves to be a higher class Jew than the Hellenists, than the people out there living in the other countries. Those people were influenced by the culture they lived in. They believed in God, they served God, but they may have a little different slant on some things. So the Hebrews who were called the Hebrew Jews, they thought themselves to be better people than the Hellenist Jews.

Well, so you have this dynamic of prejudice between the two groups. They didn't like each other. Now add to it this situation that you have widows, and these widows had needs. And the Hebrew culture was the one that was pretty amazing as far as taking care of people. Where ever they had a synagogue they would have this type of ministry. A synagogue was their local church. And if there were 12 married men, they could begin a synagogue. So these synagogues popped up all over around the region of Israel. There would be 2 men who were called receivers of alms. And on Friday mornings, they would go around the market place of the town, and they would go to private homes and they would collect money and goods for widows and other people that were in need. And nobody ever lacked. People who had a need, if it was a temporary need; they'd take care of it; if it was a long term need, they'd take care of it and try to help them. And widows especially, they would take care of.

Now here is what the problem was in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was kind of the institutional center of Judaism. It's where the temple was, it's where David had been king, it was the city of David, so much history was there, and it was where the heart and soul of Israel was. So people could be born up in Macedonia, the Northern part of Greece, they could be born there, they are Jewish. But they had a dream and they had a hope that at the end of their lives, they could move to Jerusalem and when they die, they would be buried there with the fathers. That's what they wanted to do. And so, in this institutional center you had a huge amount of people, older people moving in to the retirement communities. So they came and there they were and as is now, it was then; the women were outliving the men. And many of those women were widows.

Now this was a great disadvantage to Greek widows because they didn't have the network of friends or family that they had grown up with around there. They are way back home. And so that complicates things. And then what complicates things as well, apparently in the distribution, some of them were being overlooked. And so those converts, those mail converts who were of Hellenists background, they rose up and they began to murmur and complain against the Hebrew converts. So there is quite a ruckus going on in the young church.

Now notice what it says in verse 2. "Then the 12," those are the apostles, "summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables.'" Well shallow reading, you get the impression that 'O there is nothing more important than what the pastor does when he is preaching.' You know, 'you low life deacons and

elders,' and that kind of stuff, you know, 'all you people that set up chairs and make a facility run,' and of course you got all the folks doing the potluck meals and all that kind of stuff. It's kind of; you can read it and say, "This is a lower form of ministry to not preach the Word of God." That's not what it's saying because we just read that in chapter 4 the apostles themselves had been distributing the goods to other people. That's a worthwhile thing. But now that church has grown. It has grown beyond the capacity of 12 men to do all that plus have other responsibilities. So there needs to be a shared ministry. And the church is going to go through an evolution here where it will become organized.

Now in Acts 2 verse 42 it gives the description as to what the work of the apostles was supposed to be or what the affect of the work of the apostles is. In Acts 2 verse 42 it says: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" that means teaching, "... and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." The primary work for the apostles was to be teaching the Word of God. Now Satan is attacking the church in this story, Acts chapter 6. He is attacking the church. The church will respond to it. The 12 will say, "Look, you guys come up with 7 people, give us their names, we'll set them apart for ministry and we'll take care of this thing." And so that's what happens. And notice chapter 6 of Acts, verse 7, they did all that and verse 7 it says: "And the Word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and the great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."

So the attack came, the apostles said, "Look, give us the names of 7 people," got those seven. They had 3 qualifications: had to be filled with the Holy Spirit, had to have good reputation, they had to be wise. "Give us those men, we'll pray over them, set them apart for this ministry," and everything settled down again.

Why is this story here? Why is it in the Bible? Of all the things that happened, why this story? What's its significance? Well on one hand we could say it's an introduction to Stephen. And he will captivate the next 2 chapters, so we have an introduction to Stephen. And that's plausible. It also shows how the church should work. But be careful about that because you will note that in the book of Acts, there are some times when they brought everybody together and said, "What should we do?" and there is other times when the apostles said, "This is what you are going to do." You know, different situations require different responses for leadership. So it's not a one method for all situations type of a description.

It is actually showing us another attack on the church by Satan. Now, Satan is either not creative or he has no need to change. Because there are 3 methods he used to attack the church back then, and he uses those 3 methods today. So he is either not creative or they are just terribly effective so he doesn't have to change. But it will be who wants to know what these 3 things are? Because what affects the institution, affects the individual and these 3 things can affect the individual as well. Notice this: the very first attack on the church happens in Acts chapter 4. Acts chapter 4, you have Peter and John. And in verses 1-3 they are arrested. It says, "Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening."

So they are arrested. Follow that story to verse 21 and it says: “So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people since they all glorified God for what had been done.” Okay, so what do they do? They arrest them and the next day they say, “You stop preaching in the name of Jesus. You stop spreading His name all around. If you don’t we are going to...” and it doesn’t say what they are going to do. But they threatened them physically.

Look at Acts 5 verse 17. We read this last week, studied it a little bit, Acts 5:17 it says, “Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.” Now all 12 apostles are arrested and they are put in prison. What happens? You remember that they were released by an angel and were out there preaching, so they sent for them the next day and they brought them back peacefully. They wanted to kill them. But there was a man who was well respected. Gamaliel is his name, and he said to them: “Look, don’t kill them. If it’s of God, you’ll be fighting God. If it’s not of God it will come to an end. Don’t worry about it.”

Now, same chapter, come to verse 40. It says, “And they agreed with him. And when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.” So the first arrest, they are threatened, the next arrest, they are beaten. And I mean, beaten. They are whipped 39 times. They are just within a hair’s breath of their life. That’s all. And these men, they get up, and they go back rejoicing that they were found worthy to suffer in the name of Jesus. I am telling you, it’s amazing what happens when Christ comes into somebody’s heart, amazing what happens.

Well chapter 7, Acts chapter 7 in verse 54 we catch a little bit of a speech of Stephen who had been arrested. In verse 54 it says: “When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.” They are very angry. In verse 58 it says, “...and they cast him out of the city and stoned him.” They killed him. In verse 59, they stone Stephen. Acts 8 verse 1 it says, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria...” So, one of the attacks of Satan on the church was the physical threat. We saw it get ratcheted up. There was the verbal threat; they were beaten physically; now people are being killed.

Satan sought to weaken the spiritual resolve of the church so that people would refuse to stand. And cowardness would take over, and they would yield their faith, they would give it up.

That was one attack. The other attack happened in Acts chapter 5. Acts chapter 5 verses 3 and 4. “Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.’” Here is an attack that is not from the outside, it’s from within. The church it self finding that there within the church are those willing to compromise. In fact to even lie to God. If you are going to lie to God, you are going to lie to yourself; you are going to lie anybody else. And so the church was being attacked from within causing a spiritual malaise and

an attitude of spirit in compromise. God took care of that one Himself. Ananias and Sapphira were killed by God. You might not like that picture, but that's what happened. God cleaned it up. He didn't allow it to go any further, and they died as a result of their lying.

So we see 2 methods that Satan has attacked the church. First one is physical violence. The second one is moral compromise. What's the third one? Acts 6 is the third way. When I read this, first thing that came to my mind is, "Wow, it's like Jesus said, divide and conquer." You know, "House divided against itself cannot stand." So you get this group upset with that group, and I was thinking: "Well that sure happens today." So maybe that's one of the methods, and I am sure that is, I am sure that is. But that's not what is happening here. It is something much more deviant. Something much more wicked than divisions among the people. Satan is doing everything he can to have the church lost because of the good. Hm, how can we come to that conclusion?

Look at Acts 6, look at verse 2. "The twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.'" What were the demands upon the apostles at this point? What was the demand? That they set aside their praying and their ministering of the Word of God to do good things and to step away from the better thing that they had been called to do, which was preaching the Word of God. You see, it was the preaching of the Word of God that caused the Word of God to go out. It was the preaching of the Word of God that informed and educated the people as to the ways of God. It is in the preaching of the Word of God that they could understand truth and error, and truth mixed with error. It is in the preaching of the Word of God that they would be protected from counterfeit, from heresies, all these things that Satan would try to bring into the church.

And so we see that the 3 things that were used by Satan would be threats causing cowards, would be lack of moral integrity causing compromise, and then turning away from the Word of God to allow acceptance of counterfeit. Those 3 methods are Satan's method today. If that's true, we ought to see that somewhere in the Bible. And we do. Look at Revelation chapter 13. Rev. chapter 13 we are going to read verse 11. And by the way, as we read through this, see if you can identify those 3 things: the physical threat, moral compromise and deception. See if you can find them. Revelation 13 beginning with verse 11: "Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon." If you are not familiar with the Book of Revelation, I'll give you a working understanding just with a couple of sentences here. That has already happened. That power already exists. If you want to know more about that power, talk to me afterwards. But that has happened already. Verse 12 and on is all future. It has not happened yet. We live in between verse 11 and verse 12. That's where we are, okay?

Verse 12: "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave,

to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man.: His number is 666.”

Did you find them there? Look at verses 15-17. “He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads...” There is physical threat. “If you don’t do it, we’ll kill you.” Physical threats!

What about compromise? Look at verses 11 and 12: “Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.” Now brothers and sisters, I don’t have the time to identify who the first beast is, but I do have time to say this: “Worship God and Him alone!” This is compromise. These are people who will know what is true, but they are going to accept the lie. That is moral compromise!

What about counterfeit? Look at verses 13 and 14. “He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.” There you have your counterfeit. I am telling you right now brothers and sisters, a simple minded individual reading the Word of God and praying will not be deceived. God will not allow it to happen. Satan wants to make you a coward, he wants you to compromise and he wants you to accept that which is counterfeit.

Now I know when we talk about these things that some of you are in one of two extreme positions. Some of you may be in this side, this extreme position that happens in Seventh-day Adventist churches everywhere. And that is somebody who is so wrought up about this time of trouble thing that’s coming that their whole life is centered around it, and they are completely and totally out of balance. They do foolish things, they think that every single thing that happens in the news is another portent of this taking place right now or it is going to happen tomorrow or tonight or “I am not sure I can go to sleep tonight.” They are just all wound up and all wrought up, and they do dumb things.

I had an evangelistic series in a small town north of here up in the mountains in Tennessee. And we had 4 families show up. Nobody knew who they were? I wanted to visit them, I had their address because we had registration, and I went to the Post Office. It said rural route something with the box number for each of them. So I set the map there, asked the Post Office Man, I said, “Where do these people live?” He showed me on the map, identified exactly where their homes were, and then looked at me. He didn’t know who I was, he said, “They are all Seventh-day Adventists.” “Oh, thank you,” and I walked out. I visited those families, and every single one of them had sold their homes and moved way out into the country, beyond the mountain so nobody would know where they were during the time of trouble. I am telling you brothers and sisters,

country people know the comings and goings of folk around them, more than city people do. You live in the suburban neighborhood, nobody knows if you are there or not, and they don't even know you. So people can do some pretty foolish things thinking they are going to beat this thing. I am telling you, that's foolish! Don't get in extreme about this.

And then, there is another group of people. These folks, they probably grew up in the church, they heard some fantastic tales and some horrifying descriptions of what is going to be like and all this. And when this subject is brought up, you can see them, they won't actually do this, but in their mind they are just plugging their ears: "I don't want to hear about it, I don't want to hear about it, I don't want to hear about it." Well that's wrong too. Let me tell where the center is. It's Jesus! And the center is this: You got Christ in your heart, you'll be just fine! That's all! You'll be fine! You'll get through it just fine! He is not going to drop you. He is not going to let you fall through the cracks, you'll be just fine. Make sure you've got Christ in your heart, you'll be okay.

So we see that the old method of Satan, the old method, the physical threat, the moral compromise, deception and all that, it's going to come. It's happening now. But it makes me ask this question: If indeed that's what it says in the Book of Revelation, there ought to be something in the Book of Revelation that says how you have victory, and it ought to identify those 3 things. Would you agree with me? Well let's see if we can find it. Let's see if it's in chapter 12 and we'll look at verse 11. Chapter 12 verse 11: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb..." Let me ask you, where do you hear about that? In the Word of God! Is there any other way to get to heaven than by the blood of the Lamb? No! Who teaches us that? Holy Spirit does through His Word. "...they overcame by the blood of the Lamb." That's Biblical teaching. It goes on to say, "...and by the word of their testimony." That means there is no lie, there is no compromise, they are honest with themselves and honest with God, and honest with other people. "... by the word of their testimonies and they did not love their lives to the death."

You know, we mentioned it last week that people in China, when they leave their homes they say, "Today, I am prepared to die for Jesus." And you know when you get that settled, that settles a lot of things. People that are victorious in the last days, they've got it settled. They are willing to die. They are not going to be a coward, they are not going to be compromised, and they won't accept the counterfeit because their life is centered in Christ.

Now brothers and sisters, what does this have to do with the church today? And I am not just talking about our particular church and our fellowship, but I mean our denomination. You see, what the devil was doing back then, he was taking the very people who are called by God to spend time in prayer, studying the Word of God and sharing it with others. He was taking them and moving them to a good thing that would ultimately weaken the church. Let me ask you, do you think as a denomination, the expectations that the average church has on the pastor, is doing the same thing? Why does the pastor have to dry every tear and hold every hand? Why does he have to be at every tea party and everything that takes place in the church? Shouldn't the pastor be set aside for prayer and the preaching of the Word of God so when he stands in the pulpit, brother and sister, there is fire in that pulpit.

But no, the expectations are such that pastors aren't allowed to do that. And if they don't go see everybody that's in the hospital, they don't do this and all these things, and all the table waiting



that people expect them, if they don't do that, there is a phone call to the conference office and that guy is packing. And we are weakening ourselves. Brothers and sisters the preaching of the Word of God is how the Word of God grows in our hearts, how it spreads throughout the land, and we need to come to the conclusion that it's time for the church to be the church, and allow the pastor to pray and teach the Word of God instead of doing everything else.

I was having lunch with a number of pastors not too long ago. And this whole thing of the devil working hard to destruct pastors from the work of preaching and praying, destructed by good things - I was listening to couple of or 3 of them talk. You know them! I am not going to tell you who they are. They were talking and I was listening which was interesting, I usually talk. So I am listening. And the one says, "Man, last Sabbath was miserable for me." He said, "It was Pathfinder Day at church. They gave me 5 minutes to preach." Let me tell you something brothers and sisters. Pathfinders are cute. That's a good thing. But you are not going to prepare people to meet the Lord in peace by Pathfinder Day at church. It's the preaching of the Word of God.

The other one says, "Ha, my day was worse." He said, "I had a full sermon ready. Ready to go, man I was excited to preach it. And on the way, just before the worship began, someone from the school said, 'Oh, I've got to give an announcement about the school.' And so that individual got into the pulpit, and they were waxing eloquent, and waxing and waxing and waxing." Good thing. But he said, "Then before that person, just as that person was walking up to the pulpit, some grizzled old veteran came up to him and said, 'Hey, it's veteran's day today, we need to say something about the veterans.' 'Okay!' So by the time the school was talked about, the old guy talked about the veterans, it was 5 after 12 and people were leaving." They never had the Bible opened that day.

The other pastor says, "Brothers, I know your pain. In my church, there are so many demands upon the rostrum and the pulpit that I cannot even preach a series of sermons because I am not there more than 3 weeks in a row at any given time during the entire year." In its place, we have good things. We do school day, and children's this and children's that, we have special promotions; we have announcements that nearly choke us. Trust me brothers and sisters, music is a good thing. But God didn't build His church on worship services that were all centered in music. The preaching of the Word of God, that's how hearts are changed. That's how lives are affected for eternity. All good things, but all distractions, and it's time that all across our denomination pastors reclaim their role. They started praying, and they started preaching the way God called them. And it's time the church starts becoming a church, and started waiting on tables, and takes care of all that stuff.

I probably average 5 requests a week that I say "No" to for people wanting to make announcements here. 5 a week! I am getting reputation for being kind of mean. Hey, I'll take it because this pulpit here and preaching the Word of God is what this church is build around. And we are not going to apologize for any of it. Special promotions, programs, all that stuff let's do it at vespers. We'll come, we'll listen to it. But when you come on Sabbath to hear the Word of God, it ought to be here and it ought to be preached. And I am telling you right now, we are going from 3 staff members down to 2. And there are just some things I am not going to be able to do. I am not going to be able to hold every hand and dry every tear, nor can Pastor Kevin.

Already we are solid with things to do. And we are not going to step away from praying and studying the Word of God to take care of every problem that comes up. We can't do it.

You know, Satan is doing everything he can to destroy the work of the church. But in all honesty brothers and sisters who cares what happens to the church? What happens to us individually is what really matters. Would you be in agreement with me if I said, "The way that Satan attacks the church as an institution, he attacks the individual?" Right now your life is being choked by good things. I seriously doubt that anyone here would be considered such a vile, wicked sinner that we could use you as an example of a reprobate. I doubt it. I know your heart is wicked, but I am talking, you are not living a life that way. Most of you are good people, living a good life, but that's the problem. We are being destroyed by the good.

The Lord wants us to go back to priority number 1. That is the faith saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Where we are reading His Word and we are praying about what we've read. When we do that brothers and sisters, we will not be a coward when threatened. When we do that we will not compromise when tempted. When we do that, we, I forgot the other c. No, courage, that's not it, we won't accept the counterfeit! Even if you have a bad memory! We won't do it. This is happening so often now, I keep telling Karen, "It's only going to get worse." I am 52 now. I'll have to write key words on the palms of my hands, whatever. But you know brothers and sisters; it's all right there for us. Let's not allow the good to destroy us.

I saw the smoke coming up from the engine compartment of that 40 foot boat, and I thought, "O, o, that doesn't look right." And the reason I was concerned about it, it was my responsibility to make sure if there is a fire, to put the fire out. I will tell you, when I lifted the covering of the engine area there, and I saw flames, I didn't worry about where we were headed or what our objective was when we got there. I didn't worry about what I was dressed in; I didn't worry about anything on that list, that good list at all. I worried about one thing. That was whether the fire extinguisher was going to work, that's it. That became priority number 1 in my life. And fortunately it did work, the fire went out, we went back to where we were supposed to go and the 3 of us were okay.

Brothers and sisters, my appeal today is simple. It's just simple. Would you like to say to God: "Lord, I recognize I am being destroyed by the good, and I want to make You the priority in my life? I am asking You to help me to do that. I want to read Your Word, I want to pray about what I read, and I want to be the type of person you want me to be." If you want to say that to the Lord, I want to ask you to stand.

"Father in Heaven, what can we say except thank you that it's clear in Your Word that you are calling us to a high and noble calling, and that is to know You. And Lord, we pray that that would be top priority in our life..." (End of tape).