

“A New Perspective”
By Chris Ulrich
Sunday, May 18th, 2014

Please remain standing. Rob Severance, if you could lead in a word of prayer to start the service.
Rob: Lord Jesus, God, I give You thanks for Your goodness, Your mercy, and Your truth, Lord God. I thank You, Lord, for bringing us together, today, Lord, for another day to worship You and to hear Your Word, Lord God. I pray, Lord, that You bless Your servant, and anoint his lips, God, and grant him the words to say, Lord God. I pray, Father, that he'd be open to Your Spirit, and that your Spirit would move through him. And, Lord, through every one of us, soften our hearts, and open our hearts and minds so that we may be able to receive Your Word, Lord God. We give You thanks, glory, and honor, and praise in Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you, Rob. You may be seated. It's good to see everybody this morning. I know it's been mentioned about the theme for this month, from 2 Corinthians, but, it's worth repeating.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

I've got to say that I like this topic. It's something that we can relate to. I'm going to share a little bit about the last couple of weeks. I know, Bob, you brought the message a couple of weeks ago and the title was "I've Got a Brand New Sign." One thing that stood out, you mentioned that You grew up with the belief that you could live any way you want during the week, as long as you showed up for church on Sunday, then everything is okey-dokey. I know that you mentioned something about that, that you knew deep down that it wasn't right. The interesting thing that you mentioned was that that was what you were taught, that it was okay. I know that Parrish had mentioned last wee—he actually brought the Mother's Day message, and it was a real beautiful time. It was one thing that he mentioned about flowers, and the analogy that we give flowers to our mothers because it represents life. I would like to add also that it adds beauty. I was out bike-riding yesterday and I was out by Bradley Road, a little bit South of 176—it's springtime, so—but, I looked out to the right, and there was about every color of tulip that you can imagine. It was a really beautiful sight, and it was something, you know, it's kind of getting warmer, a little bit. I know it's not quite at the place where we'd like it to be. I've got to say, I remember, years ago, some of you know Terri Lynch—she and Jeff Lunch, they head up our fellowship in Charlotte, North Carolina—but, I remember, she had mentioned that her mother had gone on several years before that, but she was asked to give a testimony, and she said, "It's not like it's the only day that we think about our mothers, but it's something that we focus on." She really gave a powerful testimony. It was something that was from the heart. Andy, I've got to say I appreciate, I mean, to have a touch of emotion in something like that. It's needful. It's important. We're emotional people, that's true. It's not like we're just driven by that, solely, but we temper that with a knowledge and understanding and a balance in God. So, it was something that—personally, my mom's still alive—my parents have been together a long time, but I look forward to when I call her or she calls me. It's just one thing that Parrish had mentioned about some of our mothers have gone on to be with God. Maybe some people didn't have the greatest relationship[with their mothers growing up. One thing, in God, about all things becoming new, God can give us a new perspective. I'm not talking about rewriting history, or revising it, or changing everything around, but changing our perspective, giving us a good focus.

I want to get into the message in a little bit, here, and I think we've all heard sales pitches about things that are new and improved. We hear it about laundry detergent, and every year, they come out

with different makes and models of cars. I would say, for the most part, things have improved. When you think about, say, a fax machine, I mean, as far as, like, when they first came out in the seventies, and now they're antiquated, or like computers, as big as this room, and now we've got them on our phones. You're only talking about forty or fifty years; it's not a long time. Of course, there've been some problems along the way or technical failures. How many remember when they came out with the "New" Coke? Well, it was a flop, I mean, it was really a mess, and so they decided, "Well, let's rebrand it, and we'll call it, 'Coke Classic.'" For a number of years it was Coke Classic. Ford Motor Company, they came out with a vehicle, *many* years ago, called the Edsel. Vince, your dad worked for Ford as an engineer, but, I think I've heard that, as a result of that colossal failure, that the Mustang was born. Is that true, Vince? Okay, but the Mustang came in the aftermath of that, not much later, maybe '63 or '64? So, you think about—look at air travel, or you look at the automobiles, or you look at pictures of the Model T or the Wright Brothers when they were first testing flight. I mean, it's incredible, now, we've actually put a man on the moon. So, you see that some of these new and improved technologies—or maybe you could even say ways of thinking—have improved our lives in a lot of ways. We've all heard the expression, "What have you done for me lately?" Sometimes it feels like trying to keep up in a break-neck society; everybody's stumbling all over each other trying to come up with the next Samsung Galaxy 5 or Kindle or super-duper, this has got a fifty-thousand modem—I don't know. I'm not a computer IT specialist, but it seems like every time you turn around, they've got this new snap-together—or whatever—whatever it is. So, what does that have to do with knowing the Lord and having a daily walk with Him? After all, the Bible's pretty old, and, since there hasn't been any new parts added to it in the last couple of thousand years. God's been around since the beginning of forever; there's also a verse in Daniel where He's referred to as the ancient of days (Daniel 7:22). There are churches with traditions that date back hundreds or thousands of years, so what's really new about that? Well, first of all, to make a quick transition, is, knowing that nothings been added to the Bible—if you look in Revelation, in the last few verses, very close to the end, it talks bout anybody who adds to or takes away, it says that their names are going to be blotted out of the Book of Life, or that the plagues which are written in this Book are going to be poured out on them. We had a Bible study at Grandwood this past Wednesday, where a couple of the brothers—Malcolm, Greg, and Ed H.—had put together on the validity and importance of the King James version Bible. I understand not everybody was there, but, it was important and it was timely. I mean, it's the kind of thing, where it's like, "Okay, am I looking for something new, or do I want to rely on something that has been proven and is something that we can understand?" I get it, you've got Old English, so you've got to say it, and some other terminology that might be somewhat antiquated. But, then, you've also got hat you guys mentioned about how many different verses had actually been taken out, or how some verses had actually been modified. It really conveyed the importance of—and I'm not here to redo the study, but I just want to say that it ministered to me, and it reinforced something that is a landmark. We're not talking about something that it's like, "Oh, it's nice to hear," or, yeah, can we prove salvation by other versions? sure, you know, I think to a great extent. But, then, you look at what's an important standard? God's not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Second of all, knowing that God is the Ancient of Days, it helps us understand that He's also the Future of Days. It's not like He was just way back when, even though there's plenty in this day and age that would like us to think, "God's outdated; the Bible's outdated. We've got to find the God particle. We've got to clone..." After a while, I'm thinking the ridiculousness of the mentality at times... How about just seek God, live for God? You know, the Bible says, in Ecclesiastes, what's the whole duty of men? fear God, and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). God's going to bring every work into judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:14), and we've got to look at it like, if that's our duty, well, that's something that we have to look at it like, take it seriously. And lastly, I'm not here to defend every church doctrine but the truth of the gospel transcends traditions and it's what saves souls. It's not talking about, like, "We have to go by this tradition; well, did they hold the

scepter this way or that way? Was this cup used to have a ceremony?" Those things, they're not important. What is important is all things become new, and understanding that there has been a change.

My first point is when all things become new we rely on God in all spiritual matters. That means we trust in him, we give thanks to him, and we rely on him in spiritual matters. I say spiritual matters because I firmly believe there are plenty of choices we make every day that God doesn't care about. It could be the restaurant we frequent; it could be the type of hobbies we have; it could be the styles of clothes... They're not of any significance to God at all. So where is the line drawn? Well, we certainly need to seek God for wisdom to gain understanding, but if I were to offer a suggestion of a place to start it would be matters that involve behavior. Behavior is one of those things that's been there since the beginning of time. That's what connects us to Adam and Eve.

Jeremiah 17:7-10 *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

Behavior is what causes us to smile or frown, to get happy or get angry, to love or hate, to forgive or not forgive and to sin or to keep ourselves from committing sin. I know this isn't a pleasant passage, I mean, especially the part about the heart being deceitful above all things, but we have to come to grips with truth. I mean, it is in the Bible, and it is a matter of not being a downer, but a lot of coming clean before God is acknowledging there's a difference between our soul and our flesh and it's a matter of deciding what's going to have control. Walking in the Spirit and not fulfilling the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16) is a good barometer to use to guide us in our day to day activities. Trusting in God is another key ingredient. And thanking God for what he's done, what he's doing, and what he's promised is critical to keeping us in the race. So, it is a matter of coming clean, and understanding that, you know what? there is a separation between our flesh and soul, and, I've mentioned this before, if you really want to drive—I'll just say it like this, I was an atheist for a period in my life, but if you want to drive them nuts, ask them if they've got a soul. That's going to be the big divider—"I don't have a soul." Okay, well, I don't know what else to say. I know I do; I know we do. Everybody—like you said, Bob—deep down in their heart, they know they do. This isn't a matter of just railing on any particular group, but it is a matter of, I think there's times when God wants us to defend the Gospel and stand our ground. That's one of the big differences—Brent and I were talking a couple of nights ago—if you look at it like, in the Old Testament, some of the victories that the Children of Israel had, there was like thirty-one kings that he and his army had annihilated. I'm not watering it down, or trying to make it politically correct, or soften the blow, but pretty brutal, but that's also like Floyd Mayweather, is that the boxer out there that's like 45-0? Whatever. My point is that those are victories in God. What are the equivalent victories in this day and age? I mean, we're taking ground, but we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against evil, and wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12). We're going to get into this a little more, especially when you think about the tone of this nation, or the direction that it seems that this world is headed. I'll be honest; I don't like it. I want to mention something later on that I think is going to put things in perspective, too.

The second point, today, we have to see the end from the beginning. That means we live our life in faith in accordance with knowing that there is a finish line for all of us. That might sound like gloom and doom to some, but not for those of us trusting in God. We live in a troubled time, but the honest to God truth is that history is filled with events that I guarantee those living during those times

thought for sure that this is the end. You can even go back to this past century, World War 2, I guarantee you there were people—I mean, when you saw all these nation's armies that were gathering. There were times when—looking back at the history of it—we were unsure whether we were going to beat Germany. I would say that that's perilous times (2 Timothy 3:1). I mean, there's no doubt about it; you go back to 1918—and I'm not even talking about World War I—there was an influenza virus that hit the world that just devastated the entire world. I read some things that 1/3 of the people were affected, and it killed nearly fifty million people. That—when the population of the world, at the time, was, maybe a billion and a half? I mean, you're talking about just catastrophic. Then, reading even further back: the bubonic plague. I'm not trying to make this sound like, "Oh, this is just horrific." But, understanding that when these events happen, it's a matter of keeping it in the right perspective that, okay, because a knee-jerk reaction is, "The end is happening right now! It's happening today!" Okay, that's good to live like that; it's good to live like Christ is coming back today, and—I'm going to get into this a little bit—we have to have a plan. This might sound a little strange, but the plan is: I've got to have a plan for my family, I've got to have a plan for my profession, I've got to have a plan for my retirement, I've got to have a plan for financial spending and live within means. That's not like, "Oh, the end is tonight, so forget it. Give everything away." There have been plenty of people who have proven that, and disaster ensued, basically. The Bible says that no man knows the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man shall return (Matthew 24:36-37). That's something to put in your tool box. I mean, some of you already know that, but for some of us, maybe hearing it for the first time, when we hear these false prophets, saying, He's coming back in this year or that year, or this month or whatever, that one verse alone, it debunks that completely. I'm not trying to be morbid or scare anyone into accepting God, but, if we try plan out every step of the way, how are we going to let God speak to us? I'll give you an example: There was a friend mine that turned fifty last year, Jim Bailey—some of you know him. So, we took a trip from here, all the way out West. All the way to the Pacific Ocean, by the way. We had some plans for things that we wanted to do along the way. Lagoze and I made a trip a few years back, similar-type trip; helping Tony Mattea when he was moving out there. There were a few things we wanted to do out there: We wanted to visit Tony Mattea, and we wanted to visit the Joshua Tree national monument, which, if you've never been there—I'm going to tell you the truth—I thought it was one tree. Some people might think, "What's he?" but, here we are going through this huge swath of land, and it's like 109°F, and we're like, "Where is it?" Joshua tree is a type of tree, but there's hundreds of thousands and millions of them. We figured that after we got through that. Going through something like that for the very first time, but some of you may already know that. But, anyway, those were some of the plans that we had along the way, but, you know, some of the thing—I remember, we even met this older guy, in Vinita, Oklahoma, in an ice cream shop, and we got a chance to share the Gospel with him. It's one of those things where it's like, okay, we're not inviting him to church. I mean, it's like, "Oh, sure, I'll be there next week-end." It's like seven-hundred and fifty miles. You just meet people where they're at. I know that we were coming through the western part of Oklahoma City, and we didn't know that there was a tornado that had hit, you know, a couple of days prior, and it was the one last year that, they said it's the widest tornado ever. I've never seen a tornado, and I had never seen the aftermath that close. This wasn't our plan—that's my point, we weren't planning this—we just thought, "Well, let's drive down this road." So, we're looking around, and, all of the sudden, we look, and we see this, you know, trees shredded down to just their trunks, people walking in these fields, and it was heartbreaking; I have to say that. I mean, it's like, you see cars out in the middle of this cornfield, and it's like, "Oh, my God!" I had never seen anything like that, but I have to say, I had my camera, but, you know what? I'm not going to take pictures of this. It's just one of those things where it's like, for the respect of the people—I'm not a journalist or a news reporter, where it's like, "Oh, yeah, I've got to get all the pictures of everybody." It was one of those things where it's like, that wasn't planned. One last point before I move on: We were in Tucumcari, New Mexico, and we met this guy—I'm a bike rider, so

it was interesting—we met this guy, and he was biking from Bakersfield, California, to Norfolk, Virginia. He had all his gear and everything, and I was like, “Oh, my God! You’re my hero, man.” But it was like, I go, “How long is this going to take? He says, “Forty days.” I asked, “Why is that?” and he said, “Because that’s how long Elijah, and Moses, and Jesus Christ fasted.” I’m like, “Hey, that sounds good to me; if you can make it in forty days...” I mean, it’s just—you come across things like that. What’s all that got to do with seeing the end from the beginning? Sometimes, by not trying to plan every step of the way, to think we’ve got everything figured out, we keep ourselves open to the voice of God, when God says move this way instead, or do this instead, or go back to your country another way—think about, like, the wise men: God spoke to them and said, “Don’t go this way; go back another way.” Again, I want to reiterate that point about—because I’m certainly not telling anybody to plan, but, along with that, we have to live as though Christ is coming back today, but, what I mean by that, I plan, in my flesh, Christ is not going to come back in my lifetime, but I have to live—and there’s a separation, because I want Him to come back. I’m not looking at it like, “Delay it. Hold off.” But, just because, any one of us, our desire to see Christ come back as soon as possible. God is patient.

Matthew 24:3-13 *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

So that’s another passage, and, again it’s not like we’re trying to water it down in the after-commentary, but I would encourage to say, “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” That’s one of the big differences right there, because all of these things coming upon the earth—men’s hearts failing them for fear of the things which are coming. That brings up my last point, but I want to say that before I delve into my last point, that these points today aren’t the only ones; when we become a new creature in Christ, it’s not like just three things happen. I mean, obviously, we’re all going to have some different things that really stand out. I feel like God laid on my heart a few points that I like. But there’s other things, like, it could be that you view your family differently, or you view your job differently. I look at music differently; before it was like, “Oh, yeah, I like wailing on this,” whereas now it’s like you focus on Christian music. There might be some things in your life that differ from these, but God’s will is to change us all for the better if we allow it. Having said that, the last point is not having a fear of death. About a month ago, we had our Good Friday service, and Parrish asked a few people to come up and share, and I honestly don’t remember specifically, but I do remember—and I talked to Abby, who is Ken’s wife, to see if he’d be here today, and she said, “Well, I’ll take credit for what he said.” I said, “Well, I’m going to say that Ken said, ‘I’m not afraid to die.’” She said, “No, no, give Ken the credit.” “Will do, I’ll make sure I mention that.” When Ken shared that, that really got a hold of me, because that’s one of those things where it’s like, there is fear in the not knowing, and what you don’t know, it is scary, because then you’re looking at it like, “I don’t know where I stand.” If we don’t know where we stand with God... I mean, people can overcome in their mind, and say, “I’m not afraid to die. I’m ready,” whether it’s something as traumatic as they’re being executed, or maybe it could be something like they’re in a real severe battle, or it could be an illness, something could be wrong in turn.

We've all heard people say, "I'm not afraid to die." That's good. As Christians, we definitely are looking at it from the standpoint of, "Yes, I'm not," but we still feel emotions just as much as anybody else. I appreciated what Ken shared, because that was something that he said before he became a Christian. That's one of the big separations where you cross over and all things are become new; now we've got a new perspective. Again, getting back, Bob, as far as the—just about everyone feels that way too because deep down in our soul when we don't know or aren't sure then it is distressing; it is scary.

Hebrews 2:9-15*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Those last two verses, especially, it's something that God understands that that is a fear, because it's an unknown, and it's something that affects us. Part of not fearing death is also not fearing the looming storms and the tribulations that Jesus promised us would come back in Matthew 24. I'm not saying we don't have concern or aren't affected, and it's true that talk is cheap when we can't back it up. But we have to settle within ourselves that God is for us and not against us, He promised He would never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), and I know it might even sound a little corny because it's just a lyric from an old gospel song, "He didn't teach us to swim to let us drown." "I've got a brand new sign with bright red letters hanging on the door of my heart," just what we need for what ails us.

None of us knows what the future has in store. This world might last another five-hundred years and then again it might all be over tonight. Christ said himself that no man knows the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36), and that's something we mentioned earlier. There certainly seems to be a rising wave of uncertainty and insecurity, and, again, I'm not going to tell you that I have a warm and fuzzy feeling about the way things are going. But, here's my movie reference: Any bikers out there—not pedal bike, but actual motorcycle riders—there was a movie called, "Easy Rider." There's a scene in there—now, this movie came out in 1969, so, to give it a little time-perspective—there's a couple of guys that have gone from California to Louisiana. I like it because it's a road trip movie. Anyway, the part that really stood out to me, because it's—these guys are sitting round talking, and one of them says, "You know what? this used to be a heck of a country. I don't know what happened." It catches my attention, because, in a lot of people's minds, now, those were the good old days. "Oh, things were so great back then!" Not everybody, I suppose; I know the sixties was a very turbulent decade. It's not a matter of looking at it like, "Oh, sure they were," because, maybe for some people they weren't. There were a lot of riots in different parts of the country. You had the Viet Nam War that was going pretty strongly, I mean, you had a build-up of troops there, and there was a lot of discontent; there was a lot of protest. But looking at it, again, "This used to be a heck of a country." I believe everyone here does love this country, but I look at it like, you know what? we're not going to be saved, and God's not going to say, "Where did you live?" and we're going to say, "I lived in the United States," "Fine, that's great; you're okay." We're going to be standing before God, and it's going to be a matter of, "Did you accept my truth?" Are you living a life where people can see that all things are become new? We have to let that passage in Hebrews encourage us. It'll put meat on our bones; it'll give us confidence in a time

when confidence seems to be lacking. And it'll strengthen us when we feel rattled and it'll comfort us when everything else seems to be falling apart. It's part of what having a new perspective is all about. I want to read it a final time:

1 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Thank you for your time.

