

“Going to the Vault”
By Chris Ulrich
Sunday, November 12th, 2017

Thank you, you may be seated. It's good to see the singers this morning. I know that last week that Linda was out, Malcolm was out, Kirk was out, Parrish had the message, so, Andy and Sonia filled in, quite admirably, I think. I sent Andy a text afterwards, and I said, “You know, I’ve just got to say that, I didn't know it was coming, now, maybe you did, but, as the service was going, I just appreciate that, stepping up like that and filling in,” and it was great to have everybody back, too. I want to say that. So, I’d like to welcome John and Quanita and Rachel Rice. They are here this morning from Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. Martin is also here. He is a Navy veteran, a twenty-year man that retired with honors. I’d like to welcome Laygoze. Laygoze’s here. He and Lorraine had been down in Chicago. Lorraine has been doing chemotherapy treatment, and our prayers are with her, and our prayers are with you, Brother Laygoze. And, Ron from the Navy, a chief in the Navy, this is your last week with us, right, going out to San Diego? Going back home, going to San Diego. It's been a pleasure having you these last couple of months. So, thanks, Ron.

So, there was a sermon that I remember hearing back, a few years back, where it talked about protecting our ministry, and protecting God's blessings in our life, and the salvation that God gives. I know, on the one hand, it's a little embarrassing because I really don't remember who gave that message, but, suffice it to say that it came back to remembrance as I was preparing this week. And, often times, our lives are just like that, we have an event, we are part of something, we do something, we hear about, we see, or are a participant in, and, then, we forget about it, and for many years, a lot of times. And, that's not to say that it's about forgetfulness because a lot of times, God brings those things back in remembrance. And, God brings those things back in remembrance just at the right time. But, I would say that that's human nature, too. And our mind only has so much capacity that we can only keep so many thoughts going in the course of the day. There's no way anybody could remember every single solitary thing of every event of their whole life all at once.

I'd like to ask Brother Alex to come; he's going to read from the Book of Second Peter, chapter one, verses ten through seventeen:

2 Peter 1:10-17 *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Thanks Alex. Would you bow your heads, in a word of prayer, with me, please? God, we just come to You right now, and we thank You for the blessings that we have received this morning, in testimony, in song, in fellowship, Lord God. I ask right now, Lord God, that You would bless this time, the teaching of the Word, the preaching of the Word, the sermon, as we've come to know it as, Lord God. I ask, Lord God,

that You would anoint every ear, Lord God, that You would anoint my lips that I would get out of Your way, Lord God, that Your message would come forth, Lord God. We thank You for the victories that You've given us, Lord God. We thank You, God, to be right here, right now with You, Lord God. We just want to ask these things in Your name, Jesus, Amen.

So, I don't know if there's an exception to the rule, accept the promises of God, but, typically, the things that we're thankful for are the things that have already happened, which makes perfect sense, because we're not guaranteed the rest of today, much less tomorrow. That doesn't mean we live in the past; it just means that we only have the past to base our thankfulness and assessments on.

Part 1: Looking Back in Thankfulness.

And every one of us should have a trail of victories and things to be thankful for. It could be something from several years ago it could be something that was recent. What is it we do with it, to keep track of those victories? What is it that we do to remind ourselves, to be able to go back and to think about and to reflect on those things? I'm going to ask for some participation here in a few minutes. But I'm going to share something briefly that jogs my memory and gets me to remember. I don't know how many here are picture takers, or have a collection of photo albums. I know a lot's changed with camera phones, in the way you can store things in the cloud, or the way that you can keep track... It's just technology if you go back fifty or sixty years, I used to have those type of cameras that they would instantly come out. They weren't really the greatest quality if you remember. And, then you got into a timeframe where you started getting into digital cameras, that the quality certainly improved. My dad has a really nice collection of pictures that probably dates back fifty or sixty years. Lot of times. When I go home, I like to take out a few of those albums, and just look back, just kind of reflect back. To remember the times that we did this or our family did that, or we had visitors, or whatever the case might be. I think I kind of inherited that hobby, as far as being a picture taker. I don't have nearly as big a collection as he does. I think I've mentioned this before, but, every now and then, I do kind of like to take a look back, reminisce a little bit. It just gives me a chance to reflect back on how good God has been in my life. And I want to share something that Parrish had mentioned last week that I felt was really a highlight to me, and one of the points that he made was we can't let anybody belittle the blessings that God gives us. How many of you have ever said something that you felt was really important and somebody else said, "Oh, well, that's nothing," has that ever happened? How many people have said something we've done the same thing. "Oh, that's nothing," so I'm not letting us off the hook, here. But, it's one of those things where we kind of have to, really, kind of take a step back and be able to listen, and be able to respect that which is being shared. Even if it might not seem like that big of a thing to us, but I appreciate that point; we can't let anybody else belittle the blessings that God has given us. Because, I would venture to say that, a lot of times, they might not mean nearly as much to somebody else, and yet it's something that God has given us. But, if it means looking at pictures, if it means spending time with family, if it means healthy fellowship, if it means going to a museum, if it means just having a cup of coffee. And, it's those things that give us an understanding, and a way to think back and remember the things that God has done for us, then, by all means, use whatever you have to bring those things into remembrance, like we just read about in Second Peter. I don't know if you noticed, but just the word 'remembrance' is mentioned on three separate occasions in just that passage alone. And, so, it's a critical component. It's something that God wants us to be able to think back at times. Yeah, we have to live in the here and now. And, again, this isn't about living in the past. But, now, what I want to ask everyone is, "What is it that you do to remember the trail of victories?" And, I'm not asking, so please hear me out, I'm not asking for you to tell me, "This is what I'm thankful for," because we could spend all day, and all week, perhaps. What I'm asking is, "What do you use in order to remember those things in order to be thankful?" And I'm going to ask for people to go ahead and raise their hands. Donna.

Donna: Journaling.
Journaling. Writing things down. Alex?

Alex: Talk to others about it.

Talk to others about things, anybody else?

Mike: Fellowship

Fellowship that's a good one. Definitely. Jason?

Jason: Facebook

Facebook. One of my favorites. Just kidding, I'm not on Facebook. But I've learned to respect it more. Sonia?

Sonia: Write out cards and letters.

Write out a card. Brent?

Brent: Just remember where you've been.

Just remember where you've been at.

Ed H.: Pray and God brings it back.

Absolutely. Absolutely. Ed Kretzer:

Ed: Revisiting the blessing?

Revisiting the blessing. There's a lot of ways to do that, too. Matt?

Matt: Talking with my siblings.

Talking with his family. Amen. Thank you, thank you.

So, the title of the sermon today is going to the vault. And, I thought about, "Going to the Well" as the title, because I like that expression a lot.

This is Fort Knox.



That's not really, but, Fort Knox is where they store all the gold in the US Reserves. At least, that's where they're supposed to. So, I looked at a bunch of pictures of that, I mean, it's fortified. I mean, it's the kind of thing where you've got the bars, you've got steel, you've got combinations, and it's protected. It is protected in a way that it meant not to ever be broken into. So, the vault is not really that common of a term anymore. It's not as though anybody has vaults in their house, at least, I mean, if you do, you don't have to tell us. But, I believe that most people have a place they'll have a lock box, a place of safekeeping. So, what it really comes down to is just being able to protect something.

I'm going to ask if you would turn with me to the Book of First Corinthians, eleven, twenty-three through twenty-six:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

Now, I think we all know this is probably one of the most common communion passages, but it's relevant to this message, because it's about remembering something. So, going all the way back to the beginning where I asked or talked about the message that we've got to protect God's blessings in our lives, we've got to protect the ministry. We've got to have skin in the game. And, we've got to have a way that we can remember these things, and store them for safe keeping. So, my question now is, are we protecting the things that God has given us in our own vault? Are we revisiting these blessings on a regular basis? And, I get that there's problems in the world. And, Andy, you were almost stealing the message because you were getting going up here, with the things about fear, and the problems in the world. And there's enough of those problems that are going to last us until kingdom come, and there's going to be more challenges ahead, and some that were going to discuss in part two. But, there's a lot of victories, and there's enough of those things to be able to outweigh the setbacks and keep us with a thankful heart. Our theme of the month is being thankful. Our theme this month is something that we do every November. It's not a mystery. It's not something that's out of the ordinary. But, I would have to say that if I went back a year and added up all the experiences of the last year. The Bible talks about the path of the righteous is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18). We're making progress. If we're that much closer, like Andy had mentioned, about, we're that much closer to Heaven or Hell. It's weighing it up. But, looking at it for those of us who believe, we're one step closer to God, we're one step closer to being with God. And, God will give us all a place, or a vault, if you will, where we can keep those things.

So, it's true that thanklessness is the exact opposite of thankfulness. Would anybody here dispute that? That's good, I wasn't looking for an argument. But, I'm not here to tell anyone to be thankless because I believe that, in our circle of people, in our support group, in our church, our ministry, whatever way you want to describe it, there's not a lot of thanklessness. And, I get that we've all seen people come and go, or people that get bitter, or whatever the case might be. But, by and large, the pervading mentality, and the heart of people is to be thankful. But, what I want to talk about now is that living in dread of the future, and the unknown, is also in opposition to being thankful, to thankfulness. And, I want to say that one more time because, again, Andy, you did highlight that: Living in fear and dread of the unknown and of the future, it is in opposition to being thankful. And I'm not saying, "Oh, it's the biggest sin; it's going to..." but it will derail us, and it will slow us down, and, it will get us worrying, and fearful, and losing sleep at night, and whatever else side-tracks us. Because, if we're only thankful based on the events that have already happened in the past, and not future events, well, what sort of outlook should

we have in a world that seems to be getting more and more violent and corrupt? How are we as Christians supposed to think about what lies ahead?

So, three events that have happened, just in the last month: You had the shooting in Las Vegas; you have that attack in New York of eight people that were run over by a truck; and then you had this attack down at the church in Texas. Now, if you went back and looked at news headlines from say, twenty years ago, thirty years ago, forty years ago, something like that was only a once in a lifetime type of event. And, now we're talking about something that's happened like that three times in a month? It just goes to show you that there is a lot to be said, the Bible says iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24:12). I'd like to ask Jennifer Fuentes if she would come; she's going to be reading from the Book of Second Timothy, chapter three, one through five. So those events are just the tip of the iceberg. I mean, there's plenty of other circumstances, or heartache, or tragedy, or misfortune, or whatever way you want to put it, that's happened, not just in this country, but throughout the world. So, go ahead, Jennifer, please.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

Okay, thank you very much. So, I remember about five years ago we were having studies at Kirk and Nubia's house, and Kirk and I were the teachers. And, every so often we'd ask the people that came regularly, "What are some of the topics that you'd be interested in hearing?" So, we'll get everybody's input, and then get together and decide on a schedule, and come back. So, I remember Jennifer, probably about twelve at the time, so, she had asked for a study on the future. And, I remember, that's such a great topic, and I'm going to tell you why: So often times, especially when it comes to Christian circles, we're thinking end times, end times, death and destruction, and fire from above, and knowledge shall be increased, and many shall run to and fro, and men's hearts failing them for fear of things coming on the earth, or, just thinking nonstop about all the scary things and all the plagues that are coming on the earth. And here's a girl, at the time was about twelve, asking for a study about the future. So, Kirk and I had kind of discussed it. And it was interesting because she's got her whole life ahead of her. And, we're going to sit there and say, "Oh, no, let's talk about the end times," because she wasn't asking about the end times; it was about the future.

Part 2: Looking Forward in Hopefulness.

And, again, it's not as though we just bury our heads in the sand or pretend that these tragedies, or these different unfortunate events, or these shootings, or whatever; don't happen just for the sake of trying to be positive that's not what Christianity is. I mean, we're positive, just for the sake of being positive, that's not it at all. A lot of it's more about being realistic. But, again, we can't shy away from these hot button topics, but we have to have an understanding of what the Bible teaches about these different things. We just read a passage from Timothy about perilous times, and, there's probably about ten other passages that are right along the same lines, right in the same wheelhouse. But, how many remember the lyrics to the song, "Because He Lives?"

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow;
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know, He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives!*

I can face tomorrow. The fear is gone. God holds the future. It's all about looking forward in hopefulness. I don't remember the last time I heard this song or we did this song, and, I'm not asking the singers to come up afterwards, unless they want to. I would venture to say that I hadn't thought about this song in a while, too. But, as I was preparing this week, I believe God brought this into remembrance. And again, that's what we're talking about, that God will bring things that are relevant. And to me I would sum that up by just saying, isn't that just like God? That He does bring things into remembrance, that He does give us a little bit of strength.

In the Book of Revelation, it talks about, and I'm not going to ask you to turn to it, I know it's toward the end of chapter two. But, when God was talking to the church, and He said, "I've given you a little strength." And I often thought about that from the standpoint of, a little strength doesn't seem like enough. But if God's given us a little strength, that is enough. Parrish talked about, last week, when Elijah went to the woman and her child, and all they had was enough meal and oil to last one day, and said, "And then we die." And that was a little strength. And, then God sustained them for a year, off of what looked like, "This is absolutely nothing. This is probably going to last us—this is it—this is one day's worth of meal." And 'hope,' that's a pretty common term in our language, and, yet, I had to look it up. I wanted to look up the definition. Simply put, it's the feeling of expectation or desire for a certain thing to happen. It's a pretty simple and straight forward, and straight to the point definition. I'm going to ask for you to turn with me. This is our last verse this morning, it's from the Book of Lamentations, chapter three, verses twenty-one to twenty-six.

Lamentations 3:21-26 *This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.*

And, I remember, this was something that I had shared a couple of years back; we had something where I work where, unfortunately, somebody had taken their life. And, a lot of us, the next day, and the days following, were just trying to figure it out. I think a lot of times when stuff like that happens, people try to identify what went wrong, what caused this. And, I remember a guy that, he wasn't particularly religious at all. Good guy, real good friend, Navy guy, he was a retired chief, as a matter of fact, working at Grainger with myself, at the time. But he was kind of shaken, and he said, "I just can't understand why that guy would have done that," and he mentioned that verse, he just mentioned a part of it, he said, "God's mercies are new every morning." And, when we feel like we've failed, or we've sinned and fallen short, which we all have, that next day there's a refreshing. God brings us back, we repent, we get right, and there is that hope in God. That's what we have, that's what we have for our future. I can't promise you anything, and I've shared this before: Prior to the start of World War Two, Great Britain as a country—Phil, I know your mom is from Great Britain—was under a lot more close attack from Germany and the axis alliance that they had, but the prime minister, Winston Churchill, got before the people and said, "I don't have anything to offer you except for blood sweat, toil and tears." And, that's what I have to offer you, because, that's what it's going to take to defeat this enemy. How is that for an outlook? I mean, you think about that. How's that for an outlook of hope? I mean, that sounds pretty bleak. But, that was a realistic outlook, and sometimes that's what we face. Sometimes that's all we really have, and yet God

gives us that little strength, God gives us that little bit of strength, and I'm thankful that God does hold our future. And, I am thankful that God will keep us if we want to be kept. I know we've talked about how things that we're thankful for can be kept in our own personal vault. And, there's undoubtedly a difference between past events, and... And, I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. But, the promises of God—and that is the past, present, and future—they can all fit in that vault.

Thank you for your time this morning, and God bless.