

“The Fork in the Road”

By Chris Ulrich

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Amen. It’s good to see everybody this morning. I know our theme this month has been the Book of Colossians; we’re going to be going through the entire Book of Colossians, but, before we do, I’m going to ask Brother Jose to come up and lead us in prayer for the service this morning.

Jose: Heavenly Father, God, we have been blessed by You, Lord. And there is none here that can say that You are not great, Lord. Lord, You have reached us, Lord God, from the depths of the sins that we were in, Lord, and the traps, Lord, God, that we could not get out of, Lord. And, we look to You, Lord, and we look, earnestly, Lord Jesus, to Your Holy Word, Lord, the Word that You have prepared for God’s messenger to use, and You have prepared him, Lord. God, now, Lord, we will listen to You, Lord, and not let Your Word fall to the ground, Lord. Not one single word will we let go, Lord Jesus. Lord, give us the fear of You, so that we could tremble, Lord God, throughout the week, Lord God, before we step out and do the things that we should not be doing or thinking. Jesus, we love You, and thank You for the encouragement and the power of Your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Thank you, Jose. So, our theme verse is from the Book of Colossians:

Colossians 1:10-12 *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*

So, this morning, there’s going to be a few points that I want to cover, and they’re very simple points. If you’re taking notes, they’re one-word points.

- Deception
- Faithfulness
- Choice (and that’s going to tie in, a little bit, to the title)

1st Point – Deception

I think, a lot of times, we think about, sometimes, I guess, we’d call, like, the big sins. I think we’ve all heard that expression, as far as, like, something more along the lines of murder, or adultery, or armed robbery. You could just think of those that would come to mind, and just think about those as, well, I know our news is, our media is filled with these kinds of events, and, I actually read something, myself and Rob S. were out riding yesterday, and, there just happened to be this table that we sat at; there was a Sun-Times. And, I looked at one of the articles, just briefly, it just talked about, not just an increase in crime in Chicago, but a massive increase in violent crimes. And we’re talking about the rape, the armed robbery, the murder, the car theft, the car-jacking, and things like this. And it was kind of alarming, I suppose, and I’m not going to politicize it; it would be easy to point the finger. But, I would say that’s not our place. But, to look at it like the Bible talks about—a verse that a lot of us have heard—in Matthew twenty-four, “**And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.**” (Matthew

24:12) It talks about, in Genesis, that violence was throughout all the earth (Genesis 6:11), and that was one of the reasons that God brought the flood, because He saw this happening, and He realized, “This is not My will. It isn’t supposed to end up like this. This isn’t what I created Earth to do. This isn’t what I created people to live like.”

But, I want to start with the Book of Colossians. We’re going to jump right into this.

Colossians 2:1-4 *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*

I don’t normally do this, but I want to read some definitions, here, there’s going to be a few of them that I’m going to use this morning. And there will be some terms that I’m sure all of us are already familiar with, and there might be some that we’re not as acquainted with. And I’m not talking about trying to, like, trick anybody, or trying to, like, catch somebody off guard, or talk over anybody; I don’t think that’s our goal, ever. But, I want to give you a definition, and this is the on-line Meriam-Webster, it’s just the dictionary definition of the word, ‘beguile:’

Beguile: *To trick or deceive, to attract or interest someone, to lead by deception, to charm or enchant.*

I know a lot of us that travel, and you look at license plates from other states, and, the state of New Mexico, happens to be, if you’ve ever noticed it, it’s “The Land of Enchantment.” And I remember seeing that, especially, growing up, kind of intriguing, you know, you see all these license plates, especially when we travel out west. And, I guess, on the surface, that sounds like, “Oh, wow, that sounds like a real fun place to be.” That sounds like something that I’d want to go visit there. And this isn’t an indictment against—actually, that’s one of my favorite states. I have enjoyed visiting there. I’ve been there on a number of occasions, travelling through. But, enchantment, I mean, if you look at the Biblical definition of that, it’s not something that we want to partake in, it’s not something that we want to seek, enchantment. But, getting back to the term, ‘beguile.’ This is not a common Biblical term, there’s only 7 times in the Bible that it’s actually written, but it just so happens to be twice in the Book of Colossians chapter two. And I want to read from the Book of Genesis, because this one other place, this one other key point in humanity where the word, ‘beguile’ is actually used:

Genesis 3:13 *And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*

So, that was the very first transgression, when god told Adam and Eve, “Don’t eat of the tree which is in the midst of the Garden of Eden.” And I know we’re in a day and age where it just seems like things have gotten so far away from Biblical teaching. I know, last month, we talked about our Godly heritage, as far as, in America, but, yet, sometimes, we talk with people, and, it’s just like, they give you the deer in the headlights look. They can’t even believe that you believe the Bible, much less any of the accounts of the events that actually occurred. I was on the weather channel, the weather channel, weather.com, you know, a pretty harmless website, right? And, it’s important for us to read between the lines, but, this one particular headline—this is on weather.com—it was written in such a way that, “Oh, it might actually *not* be a myth that the great flood occurred,” as if to say, “Most people think it’s a myth, but now we have scientific proof that, maybe, this actually happened.” I got to thinking, “What? When did that happen in

society? When did that get to a point where everybody just said, “Nah, that’s not true. It didn’t happen. The parting of the Red Sea didn’t happen. There’s no such thing as a country of Israel, and all these things that are talked about in the Bible are just myth, or just fiction, or just fables; cleverly designed fables.” That’s not the case. That’s not the case, but we have to have faith, still, to believe it. And, I want to talk about that word, beguile, because no matter how we look at it, there’s not really an easy way to word this, but “guile,” which is the root word of the word beguile, isn’t a trait we should possess of ourselves, neither is it something that we should be on the receiving end. In other words, to be beguiled, it’s going to be affecting us that badly, just as much as if we have guile, and try to be deceptive to people.

One biblical exception, and I want to share this, because there is one place in the Bible where the Apostle Paul—and we’re going to read it, in case anybody is thinking, “Well, there’s one place in the Bible...” Well, there is one place in the Bible, and it used in different context, but I do want to read it. It’s a very simple verse. This is Apostle Paul talking to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 12:16 *But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.*

Now, if you read that entire chapter, which I’m not saying you need to, but I read it a couple of times, to try to get the exact gist of it. Let’s just say that he was talking them into something that they didn’t want to do, but Paul knew that it would be spiritually beneficial to them. So, he says, “I caught you with guile, to get you to do something that you, yourselves, wouldn’t have done otherwise, but I used guile, I was crafty, and deceptive, but not in a sinful way.” That is a difference.

We’re going to continue through the Book of Colossians, but I’ve split it up in a distinct way, because of the separation of the points.

Colossians 2:8 *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

So, here’s the definition of, ‘philosophy.’ Again, I know, some of these terms, you might just be thinking, “I already know what that means.” Okay, but there might be somebody here that doesn’t, or, to get a little bit more in-depth of a definition, but:

Philosophy: *The study of general and fundamental problems concerning matters such as existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language, a set of ideas about how to do something or how to live.*

I wanted to use Colossians 2:1-4 and Colossians 2:8 side by side to help highlight the similarities between the terms ‘beguile’ and ‘philosophy.’ Because, again, getting back to—it doesn’t sound very sinful. It doesn’t sound like it’s something that’s spiritually affecting, but it is. On the one hand, ‘philosophy’ doesn’t sound quite as harmful as ‘beguiling’ but Apostle Paul is still warning the church that this is something that, it’s a reason that people quit the gospel. And, having said that, it almost seems that this verb and this noun, which is what they are, wouldn’t really be considered flagrant or egregious sins. But we’re going to be talking about what causes us to be deceived, today. What is it? And it’s something that we might think, “Well, I’ve heard that before.” I’ve heard it before, but it’s still important enough to revisit it. There’s certain things that we’re going to go through in our walk with God that are worth revisiting. Worship, for example; fellowship, prayer, there’s certain things... I’m going to ask for participation, here, in a little bit, too, about getting some input, and everybody hearing each other’s answers. About, what are some of things that will take people out of the faith?

Colossians 2:16-19 *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

So, there's that word again: "Let no man beguile you of your reward..." That's not something that occurred to me until preparing this message, that it's not really a common term, but, twice in this chapter—it's there for a reason, and it's there for us to highlight for a reason. So, I'm going to ask a question: What is it that derails people from continuing in the faith? I suppose we could sum in up quite nicely by just saying, "Sin," but the Bible teaches us in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But, if that's the case, and here I'm not trying to trick anybody, but if we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and we're still here, that means that it's not just in that completely takes us off track. Now, I will say this: Sin that's not repented of, now we're getting somewhere. Now, I know it's relatively early in the message but I want to take time to get some people's responses. If you have a one-word response or a short sentence—I'm not looking for a testimony, I'm not asking for a lengthy dissertation, I'm just asking for, what are some things that derail people? What are some things that take people out of the race? You don't have to stand if you don't want to, but, if you could raise your hands... Donna? Pride of life. Ed H? Distractions. Mike K? Lust. Matt G? Marrying outside the faith. Maria M? Lack of knowledge. Ken? The world's wisdom. Jesse? Cares of this life. Ashley? Not doing the work at home. Ed K? Not having a made-up mind. Terry? Laziness. Ken? Not forgiving. Alex? Despising the fellowship. Lena? Your environment. I was going to say slothfulness, but somebody already said laziness. Daniel? Self-centeredness. Ed H again? Lack of prayer. Okay, is there anybody that hasn't raised their hand have something that they want to add? Malcolm? Weariness in well-doing. There's a lot of them, and, you know, Mike H? Hanging around the wrong people. Environment; similar to what Lena was talking about. I know I've got a couple, and I want to add to this, because there's one I want to revisit a little later on. Now, how many here's ever gotten bored, I mean, since you became a Christian? How many's never gotten bored, ever, not one bit? That's good, that's good, because, we're talking about boredom in this world, not in God. Because, I would have to say, I don't know how I could ever get bored in God. There's a verse in Romans, it says, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33) I don't think a person that's really a Christian—I can never get bored in God, but I can get bored in the world. We can get bored in the world; that's a fact. Tragedy – overcome with extreme sadness. I would have to say that I've had things in my life, but I wouldn't say that I've had a tragic life. I mean, I'm not asking for it, either. I'm not thinking, "Well, I just want to have the absolute most hardship, the most tragedy..." To prove what? What's that going to prove? To say, "Oh, I had the absolute hardest upbringing of anybody, so it gives me street cred?" I don't think. I mean, after a while, it's like, you just keep going, "No, I had it harder..." "No, I had it harder..." "No, I had it harder..." "No, I had it harder..." I think I was kind of in the middle. We had some rough times, but we had a few good times. But, ultimately, God's not saying, "Oh, if you had the hardest hardship of anybody that's ever existed, I'm going to let you into Heaven." That's not how it works. And there's one last point, and I'm going to revisit this a little bit later, it's pettiness. I know that's no something that sounds like it's—pettiness? But, there's something that God dealt with me a few weeks ago, maybe a month ago, about somebody that I remember from way back, and, maybe some of you will remember this person, too, but, they talked about the pettiness in their life, and it was something that they felt like it kept them from fulfilling—and this had nothing to do with Christianity, but it does have to do with what could deceive us, what could take us out of the faith, what could derail us.

2nd Point – Faithfulness

Colossians 2:5-7 *For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

So, here's one more; here's one more definition of a word, steadfastness. Again, I think probably a lot of people know what it means. Okay, just bear with me.

Steadfastness: *Adherence to something to which one is bound by a pledge or duty. Resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering.*

Now, you hear the difference, as far as, that's a Godly, strong, personal trait, as opposed to, like, guile, as opposed to, even, philosophy. I know the world has its views on philosophy, because that's what it's built on. I mean, look at enough Bible, and you'll see that, on the outside of Christianity, the whole world is just built on philosophy, and astrology, and astronomy, and all that other things, and, it's like where are you getting your answers from? I mean, to me, it's like—I'm just going to share something: Sometimes we hear, like, it seems like every few years, the amount of time that the universe has existed seems to have lengthened. When I was a kid, it was like, "The Earth has been around fifty million years." Then I got older, and it's fifty billion, then I got older and it's like fifty trillion, and it's like, "What? Who's proving this stuff? I mean, what geologist, which is what they are, is studying these rock formations, or whatever it is they're studying?" But, the honest-to-God truth is, I don't really care. I don't care how long the Earth has been around, because I have a walk with God, and I know Judgment Day is coming. What do I care if the Earth has been around fifty quadrillion years, as opposed to, like ten-thousand or a hundred-thousand? What difference does it make? That's not something we're going to be asked at Judgment by God. "Nope, you have the wrong answer; it's been around a hundred and twenty-eight million years." You know, you're gone. It's not going to work like that.

Our steadfastness in God is priceless and will keep us when the going gets tough. It's an extremely valuable character trait and is a huge part of our faithfulness to God. It's what gets us in, it's what gets us back, and it's what keeps us going. It's not flashy, but it gets the job done. Can I say that again? That steadfastness, it's not flashy, and, by the way, there's not a lot of flashiness in Christianity. I mean, it's not about, "What have you done for Me now? What have you done for Me lately?" It's not. I mean, we're not out here to try to entertain, as far as, like, music, or testimonies, it's like, I tell you what, Rebekkah, are you here—you know, I appreciated hearing some of the ladies pray the other night. Because, you know, we have prayer meetings; we have men and women prayer meetings, so, you get accustomed to, like, hearing the guys—and I'm not knocking that at all, but it was nice hearing some of the ladies pray. That's good, that's good.

Colossians 2:9-15 *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

And I appreciate, Brother Ken, what you mentioned about being baptized, and Terry's helped you, mentored you in a lot of ways, but that's one big thing. That's part of being born again. That's something that gets us in the faith.

But, the triumph. This is my last definition of a term:

Triumph: *A great victory or achievement. A great and notable success.*

But, do you believe that your life is complete in Jesus? Do you believe that Jesus is enough for you? Is He enough or is there something else? I'm not asking if you think that the car that you drive, or the house that you have, or the job that you have, or even if you think you're living in the right generation, is enough. I remember a song years ago, and this was a pretty, kind of heart-wrenching, but, there was this guy, the writer was lamenting that he lived in this generation, just because of all the evils that surrounded him. And he talked about, "I wish I was born a thousand years ago, and sailed the dark seas on a great big clipper ship." And, yet, there were things around back then. There were evils around back then. There was the bubonic plague, or there was—there's always been sin and iniquity, but there's always been an escape. That escape is in Jesus Christ. And, the truth is, the good old days weren't always quite so good. We can't change the time we're living in. Maybe not even be able to change the job that we have very easily, or the house that we live in, or the car that we drive. I'm not telling you I want to end up homeless, or jobless, or penniless, because I don't, and I do whatever I can to try to prevent that. But we have people here today who, at one point or another, have been in one of those boats, in one of those situations. But, we can still have a victorious life in Jesus Christ, regardless of how bad our own situation, or the world around us gets. And I'm not wishing that upon myself, or upon anybody else, I'm just saying, sometimes these things happen, the way the economy falls out, or misfortune, or one bad decision leads to another bad decision, and, the next thing you know, there you are.

I want to read—this is going to be our last verse before we get into the next point:

Revelation 2:7-10 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

So, now I want to ask: What are some things that keep us in the faith? And I'm going to ask the same way, the same platform that we had earlier. What are some things that actually keep us in the faith? Donna? Fellowship. Vince? Being thankful. Ed K? Prayer. Laygoze? Prayer. Brent? Just knowing how good God can be. Mike A? Reading the Bible. Mike K? Obedience. Ashley? Humility. Parrish? The love of God. Andy? Having a made-up mind. Beverly? Faith. Rebekkah? Surrendering to God. Jesse? Patience. Jose? Patience. Malcolm? Tithes and Offerings. Ed H? Trusting in the Lord. Mike H? Walking in the Spirit, instead of in the flesh. Lena? Praying. Greg? Encouraging others. Daniel? Having God's love. Anybody else that has not raised their hand?

3rd Point – Our Choice

Our last point today is on our choice, and it's about the choice that we're all given. I know that "The Fork in the Road" isn't what I would call a fancy title, but there is a certain rhythm to Colossians chapter two, some parts warning, some parts dwelling on being faithful, and isn't life just like that? There's a kind of rhythm to it, where it's like you get highs and lows of emotion. You get highs and lows—you get warnings, you get blessings from God, and, each day, the Bible says that the path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18). It should be getting brighter. It should be something where we see that light at the end of the tunnel getting closer. And I get that God expects more; the Bible talks about He just increase, but I must decrease (John 3:30). That doesn't mean that we forget who we are, or we forget all our memories, and just throw everything out the window, and, like, "No, I don't have a favorite anything. I don't have a favorite ice cream I like." This is—I know, "The Simpsons," the TV show, maybe not everybody likes, but, they sort of portray the religious guy, Ned Flanders, in such a way, it's like, "What's your favorite ice cream, Ned?" "Plain!" Not chocolate, not strawberry, not pistachio, not rocky road, not black raspberry, nothing; plain! It's like—And they give his character some credence, I mean, they respect him, too. I'm not getting too sidetracked, here. But, you know, part of that fork in the road down God's path is Him asking us to do things that we don't always want to do. That was one of the highlights, Parrish, from last week. I like what you said, also, about, like, not giving just a "drive-by" thanks to God. We need to meditate upon the things that God's done for us, including studying and knowing His word. It's not just a matter of something that's cheap or...

But, you know, it did remind me of something that, when I was a kid—and I've shared many times that we weren't really that religious, at all. As a kid, I actually prayed, for a period of time, but, this was, maybe, from the ages of 8-10; this was it: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take... Bless everybody in the world, thank you God for everything, and God bless America, Amen!" It was always just, like a race, you know, so that I could get to sleep. And it was all so that I would know, "I did the will of God. I prayed." It was like, that was all prayed at, you know, two hundred miles an hour, every night, but, you know what? This is to my chagrin: it got to a point I just stopped doing it. And, I don't know, there wasn't any point where I said, "Oh, well, I'm just not going to do it," it just happened. It just happened. You know, it was fewer and fewer times, and I don't say that, like, to be overly judgmental, but I say that to say, I should have kept praying. It doesn't matter how old we are, as evidenced by all the youth that were up here earlier. I appreciated that. I mean, it was good to see, you know, some of them kind of walking around, you know, real little ones... That's—I wasn't doing that, when I was that age, I can tell you that for sure.

I'm going to share something here, and I don't know exactly what triggered this particular memory; this was, maybe, about a month or so ago: have you ever had something that came back to remembrance, like, maybe twenty years later, or, twenty-five, or however much time, it's like you just know that you hadn't thought about it in a long time? It could be a song, it could be a memory, it could be somebody's name. Well, there was a guy from our home state, Massachusetts, that I remember, as a kid, just hearing his name. He didn't have, really, I mean, his name wasn't Mike Smith; I mean, it was Paul Tsongas, which, I guess he was of Greek descent. So, not a real common name. Anyway, it wasn't like I followed his career, or anything like that. It just happened to be a name that—you know, I was talking to Bob H, and I hadn't thought about that name in a long time. Has anybody ever heard that name before. Okay, quite a few people. He did make a run for president in 1992, but, anyway, for some reason, I just decided to look up some information about him, because I was just curious as to what his ultimate fate was. This was just a short segment of the obituary I read. He actually had passed in 1997. This is actually what he had shared, while he was still alive, with the interviewer.

'Pre-cancer, I was one of the pettiest people you've ever run into," Mr. Tsongas said in an interview in 1992. "I would get angry at my wife for leaving the top off the toothpaste. I'd get angry at my kids for the dumbest things. Looking back on it I feel mortified. I was a fool."

This was a guy who was, maybe, in his forties. So, why was he such a perfectionist? I don't know, maybe he was just striving to get ahead, like everybody else, I suppose. And, this is the point that I wanted to expound on a little bit earlier, but wanted to save it until now because I believe it ties into my first and last point.

We shouldn't have to wait until we have a serious illness to make corrections in our life or make the choice to live for God. And we shouldn't let petty differences or conflicts derail us from doing God's will. Jesus knocks at the door of our heart every day, even many years after we've been baptized, and He seeks to come in and sup with us. He wants us to get over whatever it is that fuels our anger, or causes us not to forgive, or makes us judgmental. I found one thing that has kept me, and I'm going to share one thing about a brother, Tom Hansen, he was here for many years, he's our fellowship leader in Everett, Washington, but, he had a brother that was a few years younger than him, his name was Billy, and, some of you may remember him. Billy actually got baptized, sometime in the early nineties. He ended up—and I hope I'm not sharing anything really out of line—I know that Billy, he kind of went back to Minnesota; he kind of struggled with some problems in life, but, he had passed away last summer, and I remember Tom Hansen shared with me, he said, "You know, in his last few months," Tom went up to do the eulogy, and to visit with the people he was with, and the family. He said, "Billy had really made a turn back to God. He'd really been reading the Bible, and he'd just been sharing with people. And, you know, from kind of an ugly situation," and Tom shared, "That's all I can hope for." It would be easy to sit here and say, "Oh, no, he didn't move down here. He didn't do this, he wasn't preaching on the street, he wasn't right with God! How do I know that? I mean, if I'm more and more judgmental as time goes by, and pummeling everybody, and beating everybody, and thinking that they've got to live up to my expectations, I'm going to fall. Something's going to come along, and I'm going to fall. And I appreciate him sharing that, because, I thought, "You know what, Tom? I believe he made it. God's mercy's that great, and it extends that far." And I'm getting ready to close.

So, what about that choice of ours; that choice to be deceived or the choice to be faithful? I think most of us have heard the expression that we write our epitaphs every day by the way we live. And if you ever look at the actual inscription on tombstones, some of the most common terms are "Beloved" and "Faithful." I have one last story I want to share with you, here: when I was a young kid, probably five or six years old, or so, we lived about a mile from this package store called Harper's. You know, a little convenience store. So, my grandmother and I—now, this was in the summertime, we'd walk down there; she'd get her cigarettes and I'd get my Slim Jims, so, that's the fact. But, there was an old cemetery that was kind of back, a little bit, along the road, and, a lot of the tombstones were like, dark, like that material, I don't even know, like some kind of slate? That was a lot more common back then. I mean, today, you see all these fancy, like, mausoleums and so on... But, we went in there a couple of times, just to, you know, I don't know what triggered that; we went in there, and looked at some of the dates. Now, where I'm from, there's, like, 1786-1837 and, some of those dates, it was like—I remember writing them down. I mean, it was sort of fascinating, in a way; it was like a piece of history, right there. But, I also remember, when I was there last summer, I just stopped by there. I hadn't been in there—just to look at it, you know, just to see it again, just for, you know, a couple of minutes. I just kind of walked around, and, looked at it. But that was one of the common things, was, beloved and faithful. You know, it might read something like, beloved father; beloved mother; beloved child; faithful husband; or faithful wife. Those are all good ways to be remembered by our loved ones, that's for sure. But are we thinking in those same terms, "beloved" and "faithful," and wanting God to remember us the same way? We should be. Thank you very much. God bless you.