

## **Funeral for the Scott Showalter Family July 5, 2007**

### **Linden Rhodes**

This week God called five home. We are all only a breath away when God calls. Burying a child is a very hard thing for a family, especially for parents. And today we have four. I thought of the words of David when his son died. He said, "I shall go to him, and he shall not return to me."

It is God who gives breath, and it is God who takes life. And when He calls, we are only a breath away. And so I commend you, the family, to God who is the God of all comfort, who's the One that is able and wants to sustain you and comfort you in this time.

I was given a Bible and asked to share from. On the outside in a child's handwriting is written "Christina and Shayla Showalter." On the inside in pencil is found the words which they underlined and circled, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

I was asked to share the reading of the obituary . . .

### **Song, "To God Be the Glory"**

### **Nathan Horst**

To you as a family, I would like to offer my sincere condolences. You bear a loss – we all bear a loss – and my prayer is that God will be glorified and souls strengthened through this loss.

I don't know if you thought about the song we just sang. You probably wonder why we chose a song like this. I'd like to tell you why. Sunday night we had a service at the Peake church, and Scott and Phyllis and the family were there. And this was a song that was sung. And Scott sang this song unusually loud, and it was thought about by the people around him. This song obviously meant a lot to Scott Sunday night. If you think about it, though, the last sentence of the first verse goes like this: "and opened the life gate that all may go in." The last sentence of the last verse says, "our wonder, our transport when Jesus we see." For some reason this song spoke to Scott Sunday night, and we thought it was very appropriate to sing it today as well. "To God be the glory."

I invite you if you have your Bibles to open to Psalm 121. This was the passage the family requested, that was used sometime in the service, a passage that means a lot to them, and we were very happy to read this passage today. Psalm 121 is a psalm in a series of psalms. Psalms 120 to 134 are all psalms that are entitled “The Pilgrim Psalms.” It is believed that when Jewish people went to Jerusalem to the feasts, these series of psalms are psalms they sang or they said as they went along the way. And this psalm in particular is entitled, “The Pilgrim’s Helper.”

Psalm 121: I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

This psalm starts out saying, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills.” The King James gives the idea that it may be he looks to the hills for his help, but other translations make it more clear. He then asks a question, Where does my help come from? In their grief, in their stress of this journey, they looked to the hills with this question, Where will our help come from as we’re on this journey? Can we say today as we go on this journey of life, Where does our help come from? That’s answered in verse 2. It’s very clear it’s not a question to these pilgrims, it’s just part of the song. Their answer is “My help comes from the Lord.” Our help today as well must come from the Lord. The comfort we need, the encouragement we need to go forth, we must find in Christ and in His Word, because if we look to the world and the things of this world to find help, we’ll find emptiness.

He goes on then to describe the Lord and what He does. And if we read these next few verses, we could get the idea there’ll be no suffering in this world. I don’t believe these pilgrims thought that. This is a song of ascents, and it talks about what God does do for us. And God does help us. God does keep us from harm. He does help us as we go through this journey. But as we look at all Scripture, we recognize there will be suffering in this world. As a matter of fact, the New Testament is clear if you are a Christian today, you’re like to face suffering. It’s something we know is part of life.

One thing that happens many times when we come a tragedy like this, there are questions in people’s minds, Why? Why did God allow this to happen? And we don’t always know the answer. But there are some things in Scripture that we do need to recognize, and if we before a tragedy have been close to God, and our relationship to Him is one that we recognize Him as a kind, loving, caring heavenly Father, then it’s much easier to go through a tragedy. But we have to recognize that God is sovereign. God is in control of our world. But there still are questions sometimes in people’s minds. Why would a loving God allow this type of thing to happen?

Within the last year or so, I had read through the New Testament, writing down verses that talk about why God allows suffering. And there are many, many reasons. But there are three I want to talk about this afternoon very briefly.

One we must recognize is we live in a sin-cursed world. God's original plan for man was not to face suffering, but man chose to sin. And everyone of us under the sound of my voice today have chosen to sin, and that causes suffering. There are other reasons as well.

There's one very clear in the New Testament that Jesus talked about and that is the case of the blind man that was born blind from birth. His disciples asked this question, "Who sinned? This man or his parents?" And many times, as humans, we invariably in our minds think that somebody sinned and that's why they're suffering. And Jesus answered that clearly in the New Testament. He said this man was born blind for one reason – and that's so God could receive the honor and glory. I believe that God is receiving honor and glory today because of this tragedy.

Another reason in the New Testament that's given why we suffer, and that is because God uses suffering to bring people to Himself. Many times, as humans, as life is easy and we go on in life, if life just flows along, we tend to go away from God. And many times God uses suffering to bring people back to Himself. And I couldn't help but think about that as I planned for these devotions because I know that Scott had a deep burden that people came to the Lord. And if this tragedy brings one soul to Christ, I'm convinced that Scott would say, "Praise the Lord!"

In this psalm, this psalm as I said is a climactic psalm – it builds on itself – and the pilgrims talked about the help that God provided. In verse 3 it talks about physical protection. Verse 4 says that God will never sleep, we don't need to worry about that. Verse 5 and 6 He gives what we need. He gives us shade, the sun and the moon. But I am especially blessed as I look at the last part of this psalm. Because it talks about not only about God helping the pilgrims on their way, but bringing them home. And today He has brought four pilgrims home.

Shall we bow our heads for a word of prayer:

Almighty God, the God of the universe, the God who not only created us and this world, but He redeemed us back to Himself so that we can be His sons and daughters . . . Father, I just praise You today for that. We are so blessed because we can be in right relationship with You. Father, as we go through this service, I pray that You'll be honored and glorified. I pray that souls will be strengthened as we look into Your Word and look at what You have for us. I pray especially this afternoon for Brother Philip as he stands up and opens Your Word. Father, be near to him, and may Your Holy Spirit give him strength and give him the words to say that he needs. Father, I also pray this afternoon for the people that are hurting. We need You as our Father who gives us comfort. We especially want to remember this afternoon the rescue workers that worked through this accident. They suffer greatly as they are traumatized by these types of

things, and Father, I pray for them. I pray that they as well can look to You, be drawn to You, as they work through this grief. Father, I pray again for us as a congregation here at the Bank as well as the extended community. Father, my heart's desire – and I know Your heart's desire – is that souls will be drawn closer to You as we go through this time. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Song – “Does Jesus Care?” We answer that in the chorus.**

## **Philip Wenger**

Oh, yes, He cares, we know He cares. His heart is touched with our grief.

To the family, I have a verse I want to share with you, to take with you in the weeks ahead found in Psalm 116, verse 15, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” We are sorrowing, but in Heaven there's rejoicing. We, too, extend our deepest sympathies to the family. We suffer together. We as a church have had a great loss, but we carry on.

A number of verses that the family has shared with us, I would like to share with you today. When we met with the family Tuesday morning, at Dale and Reba's house, I asked if there were Bibles there – Scott's and Phyllis's. They handed me a Bible that was given to Phyllis by her parents in 1989. That would have been the Bible she would have had as a teenager. I looked through that Bible and had almost given up; I couldn't find any verses that were marked. Then I found one in Psalms and it had been marked a long time ago. The ink was growing dim. Psalm 31:24, “Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.” That verse is for you and for me. “Be of good courage. He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.”

Another verse that was suggested by the family, very precious to Scott and to Phyllis – Isaiah 59:1, “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” Scott and Phyllis went through a valley in their lives searching for peace. And this is the verse the Lord gave them. And they came to the understanding that the Lord's hand is not too short to supply all their needs. They clung to this verse, and it was a catalyst that they sprang off of into a deeper walk with the Lord. “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened” – He's not too weak to meet our needs, to save our souls, to empower us, to carry us through, to give us all we need to be faithful unto death.

These past few days have been a time of deep soul searching for me. I can truly say I've been challenged, I've been convicted, and I've been encouraged by the love and the prayer support and the unity as we worked together. I've been humbled before an almighty God. I have a renewed sense and awareness of the privileges and

responsibilities of being a child of God. We're joint heirs with Christ if you're here today as a Christian. We're ambassadors for Him in a dark and sinful world. We have a message, and we're compelled to share it. And may this service today expound that message of salvation in Jesus Christ and Him alone. The Apostle Paul said there is salvation in none other. He said I preached Jesus Christ crucified, and none other.

Also in the last two days I've been beseeching the Lord to show me – what would You have me to share this afternoon in this opportunity to speak for Him. He's given me a message from the Book of Ephesians, and I've entitled it, "What Is the Purpose of Your Life?" Several questions I like you to keep in mind as we move through this message this afternoon. What is the goal of your life? Someone has said if we aim at nothing, we're sure to hit it. What is the goal of your life? Do you have a mission statement for yourself and for your family? And if you do, where are you in reaching those goals you have set for yourself, and for your family, and for your church, people around you?

I invite you to the Book of Ephesians, chapter 1. I'd like for us to remember when this Scripture was written, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it was written – especially like the Book of Ephesians, it was a letter without chapter breaks and without verses. They were added later for our convenience. We'll be picking up parts of most of the Book of Ephesians to get the whole picture of the message that Paul had for the church at Ephesus and for each of us today, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:1-23, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved." [That's in Jesus Christ.] "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believe, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may

know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”

In this passage we see three things. We see our position in Christ as Christians, we see our purpose in Christ as Christians, and we see the ultimate goal of the Christian life.

Ephesians 1:1-11 is our position in Christ. As I look at these verses I see that we are called to an exuberant life, a joyful life, a quickened life, a life to bring honor and glory to the One who saved us. A joyous life of passion, a life of confidence; not in ourselves, not in our works, not in who we are, but in who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us. We simply surrender to Him.

Notice verse 3, blessed with all spiritual blessings. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

In verse 4 it tells us we’ve been chosen. We’ve been chosen in Him to be holy and to live a life of love. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” We’re called to a life of holiness, a life that is tempered and guided and encompassed with love, and by love.

Verse 5 tells us we’ve been adopted. God loved us while we were yet sinners. He died for us because He longed to adopt us, and to give us life, eternal life. He gave the best that Heaven had to offer – His Son, Jesus Christ. We’ve been adopted- “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” It was God’s pleasure to adopt us, to give us eternal life, to make us joint heirs with Jesus Christ. For His pleasure we were created and saved, not for our own honor and glory – for Him.

In verse 6 we see a hint of our purpose. It is for the praise of His glory, the glory of His grace. Not that we’ve earned or deserved, but by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” We are accepted back to God through Jesus Christ.

Moving on, it tells us how. In verse 7, 8 “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” We are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. Nothing less will work. Only the blood of Jesus Christ will take away the stain of

sin and make us pure, white, holy, sanctified, and beloved in Him. Verse 8 says He has abounded toward us. If you study that word in the Greek, it says He's lavished on us. It's abundant. He hasn't given us just enough to get through. He's lavished on us grace, love, and mercy.

It's God's plan, it's His pleasure, in verse 9 "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." God's plan and His pleasure for our lives, and all this is building. When John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, he had a message, and his message was the message of a kingdom. "Prepare ye the way, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," in Matthew 3. In Matthew 4 when Jesus gives His first sermon, he says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Christian experience is a kingdom experience, and it's growing, and it's coming together, and God is working and molding and shaping and working through every incident in the lives of His people to bring us together.

In verse 10, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." This is the concept of the kingdom. It's much bigger than us, much bigger than our communities, much bigger than our individual churches. God is working around the world to bring souls together for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ.

Verse 11 reaffirms our position in Jesus Christ. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." God's will. It's already been mentioned this afternoon we need to surrender to that will. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, in agony, crying out to God, sweating as it were drops of blood, He said, "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done." Jesus always did the Father's will, and later on we'll see in Ephesians 5 it says we're to be followers of Christ, and that means to imitate Christ, surrender to His will for our lives. Scott and Phyllis exemplified that, through their deep struggles, their hearts' cry to discern and follow God's will for their lives.

I'd like to go over to Ephesians, chapter 2. If we stop with Ephesians 1 we miss something, because Paul wants to remind us of who we were and what we were before all this took place. It helps to give us humility when we realize how we were when God reached down and saved us.

Ephesians 2:1-10, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." [verse 4, the tone changes. He says But God...] But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward

us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Notice, God reached out to us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. We were receiving our directions from the world. Satan was in control of our lives. We were fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, and in verse 4 that beautiful word – But. But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were in sin provided salvation for us.

And that raises another question for us to consider. Did God save us through the blood of Jesus Christ just to keep us from going to Hell? The answer is a resounding No. As we move on, we’ll see two things about the father heart of God. Number one, He desires personal and intimate relationship with us now, today. And secondly, He has work for us to do.

Let’s look at verses 11 and 12 again in Ephesians 1, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” The father heart of God desires that from us.

Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” He desires relationship, and He has service for us to fill. God never intended the church of Jesus Christ to be a cold and lifeless organization. Instead, God intends for the church of Jesus Christ to be alive, to be a living, growing organism where the Holy Spirit dwells in us both individually and collectively and brings love and unity and purpose.

Look at verses 19 through 22 of Ephesians 2: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

As Christians, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. That’s a wonderful privilege and tremendous responsibility - to be a holy and sanctified people, living lives that do not grieve the Spirit. And not only does the Holy Spirit reside in us individually as Christians, it’s in each of us so it’s in the church collectively. This brings us together in unity and love and purpose and direction.

Back to Ephesians 1 again, verses 13, 14, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” Those

verses are saying, in our language today, that the Holy Spirit came into our lives when we surrendered to Jesus Christ, and is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance in heaven. And I understand we can walk away and we can go back to walking after the flesh instead of the Spirit, we can lose out on our walk with the Lord. As our brother shared in the basement this afternoon, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” If we are walking after the Spirit, our lives are tempered. God is calling us to confidence in Him and in His work for us, for our souls. Again, we are to the praise of His glory. The new birth experience is what we are all called to. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. And I can imagine this doctor of the law wanted to hear some deep theological discourse. And Jesus said, “Ye must be born again.” Nicodemus said, “What? Must I enter into my mother’s womb the second time and be born again?” And Jesus said, “Are you a teacher of the law, and you don’t understand these things?” He was talking about being born again in Jesus Christ. We have to be born again. If you’re here today and you can’t point back to a time in your life when you experienced the new birth, I encourage you to get on your knees and implore God for salvation. I tell you settling down, joining a church, living a good life will never get us into heaven. Never. And don’t take a chance.

One of the things about Scott that touched so many people, he shared his testimony with everybody he met – what God had done in his life and the peace that he’d received when he had come to the knowledge of what he had to do. He had to surrender all, and he shared that with many people.

Again, I ask you, what is the purpose of your life? Have we caught a vision of what God intended the Christian life to be, and then are we experiencing the fullness of His presence in our lives? In His presence is fullness of joy, Scripture tells us. How’s our joy level? It’s an indicator of where we are with the Lord – our joy level. I’m not talking about happiness, I’m talking about joy that transports us through whatever we face and gives us peace. Jesus said, “My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, but the peace that passes understanding.” People who have never experienced Jesus Christ in their lives can’t understand how a Christian can face the things they face and do it with peace. It is because Jesus Christ is in our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Back in Ephesians 1, verses 15 through 23 which I’ve already read, the Holy Spirit is moving Paul to write down God’s goals for every Christian believer around the world.

In verse 16, Paul says I “cease not to give thanks for you.” [If there’s anything about the Apostle Paul we need to learn, especially as church leaders, it was his prayer life.] He wrote to each of these churches in his letters and said I pray for you regularly. I “cease not to pray for you.” And I’d like to say thank you to all that are praying today. It’s all part of being in the Spirit, lifting each other up. “I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” and notice what he says in verse 17. His prayer is for the believers “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” Wisdom

and revelation in the knowledge of Christ is a lifelong goal. It's a lifelong aspiration we have to have is to know him better.

Over in Philippians Paul says, "That I might know him and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto him, even to his death." And that's how Paul could write in 2 Timothy, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only..." [Listen, dear people] but unto all them also that love his appearing." The message there is those people who are longing for His return, when He breaks the eastern sky, and is here in the twinkling of an eye to take us home to be with Him. And I can tell you there's only one type of people that are longing for His appearing, and that's the ones that are right with Him, who have experienced the cleansing of His blood, have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and have peace and joy. They are the only ones that are looking forward, longing for His appearing. And I trust that each one here today can say that's their testimony, and if not, get on your knees and seek God. Seek God, and you'll be ready. We can have that same testimony that Paul had, "I'm ready to go." Ready to go.

Verse 18 of chapter 1 he says, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Again, it just reminds me of Scott's and Phyllis's testimony of the peace that flooded their souls after they had searched so long for God. They found peace. Scott told me that he was going through a difficult time in his life. The cows were all getting milk fever, the farm wasn't going well, and spiritually he was struggling. And one day he went into the house in the middle of the day, and he said, "Lord, please just show me something. And he opened up his Bible – I'm sorry I can't remember right now what the verse was – to a verse in Psalms, and it spoke to him, and he came to enlightenment and peace, and it changed his life. Phyllis said she was having the same struggle, and it was over the time of Pentecost, on Sunday morning. She said, "Lord, just show me." She opened up her Bible and started reading the Book of Acts, the story of the Holy Spirit coming. She said, "Lord, just fill me with the Spirit." And He did. She had peace. That was the testimony they shared. May that be our testimony too?

Go on to verse 19, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." Again, it's not what we're doing, it's His power. And notice that that power that saves us is the same power that raised Jesus Christ up from the grave. The power that brought Jesus Christ up out of the grave is ours for the asking. "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." That's the power that He offers to us.

God did all this for the church – verse 21 says where he seated Christ – "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." There's where he

seated Jesus Christ, and then he goes on to tell us why. “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.” Jesus Christ was there in creation, and He is going to come out triumphant at the end, as Lord of lords, and King of kings. The process is taking place now in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. It’s coming together. “...gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”

We’ve already looked at Chapter 2 where the church is a building fitly framed together, where the Holy Spirit dwells in us collectively and individually. We see how the Book of Ephesians just fits together beautifully, like a puzzle. When we put the whole thing together, we have a beautiful picture of salvation and of a life that is full, and a life that blesses others around us.

The question I have for you, Are we experiencing God’s design for our lives? Are we there? Are we striving to get there, or are we putting our hope in something else? We as a church are called to be a body, a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit that the world needs to see in our lives.

God has a reason for wanting to build a church with His power and presence. We find that in Ephesians 3:10, 11, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” I’d like to put it in our words today, how we speak. “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers, His eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. And in Him, and through faith in Him, we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are for your glory.”

I’d like to apply that to where we are today. I think Scotts would say don’t be discouraged because of the loss. But let it be a catalyst to spur you on and draw you to the Lord. As you come to that point you’ll be sanctified and holy through His blood and you can come to Him through faith, and you can approach God with freedom and confidence, and you can have communion and fellowship with Him. The Greek word for communion is *koinonia*, and it’s a close fellowship. That’s what we’re called to. That’s what we share together in our communion services as believers. It needs to be sincere. We have to have sincere love for each other. All the good works in the world won’t help us if there’s an ounce of dislike, discord, and hatred in our lives and our churches.

Look at verses 12 through 19 in Ephesians 3. Here in these verses I see the Holy Spirit moving the pen of Paul again in this letter to say this is the purpose of the Christian life. “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint now at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to

comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Just notice these verses. Verse 16, “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” We’ve already talked about the power that’s available to the Christian, the power that brought Jesus out of the tomb. We see it here again. “According to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might [or His power] by his Spirit in the inner man.” Being renewed daily in the inner man. And then he goes on to say that he wants us to try to comprehend something that’s impossible to truly comprehend. And that’s the love of God. But he said my prayer is first of all that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. This is faith in Jesus Christ. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded – how and by what?, – in love.” “May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” “To be filled with all the fullness of God.” That was Scott’s desire for everyone he knew and met – that they’d be filled with the fullness of God. One thing I noticed about Scott, you could disagree with him, but you knew he still loved you.

Moving on. Generally in the writing of Scripture, the doxologies are saved for the end. But as the Apostle Paul was writing here, I see him being so filled with the Spirit, as he thought about the message he was sharing, that right here in the middle of this letter he breaks forth in praise and adoration. He says, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” When we have the fullness of God dwelling in our hearts, there are times we’ll break forth in praise for our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul did that here.

There are many reasons why God intends for us to live lives that are filled with the fullness of God. And the first is because we must if we are going to have victory over sin. Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 6. I want to look at three verses here, 10 through 12. Note that six times here in the verses is the word *against*.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” [Here’s that power again.] “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Dear ones, we’re in a battle, and we don’t stand a chance by ourselves. It’s only when we are filled with the Holy Spirit and we go forth in His power and His might, that we can have victory. Only then. Don’t try to go without that. You’ll lose, and the price is high. We have to be filled with the fullness of God if we’re going to live in victory over sin.

And that leads into the second reason. I invite you to turn back to Chapter 5, verse 27, “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” That’s the body of Jesus Christ. That’s the church He’s looking for – holy, without spot, and without blemish. And that’s in the context of the Christian marriage in that passage. The relationship between husband and wife and the relationship between the bride of Christ – the church – and Jesus Christ are one and the same. We’ll talk more about that later. One of Scott and Phyllis’s deepest burdens was for marriages in our communities that were strained and broken.

The third reason, also in Ephesians 5, why we have to be filled with the fullness of God, verses 1 and 2, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.” Putting it in our words today again, he is saying, “Be imitators of God. As dearly loved children, live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us for a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” The only offering that was enough to satisfy God was the blood of Jesus Christ, the death of His own Son. And he said, “Be imitators.” Follow that. And I see He’s calling us here, if we’re going to be imitators, as we’re called to be imitators, we have to live as Christ lived, we have to love as Christ loved, and we have to serve as Christ served. The joy of Christianity is serving others, and not in serving self. Jesus Christ said, “I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,” to be a servant for all. We are called to follow him. I have a plaque on my desk that says something to the effect that the degree to which we surrender ourselves to serving others the joy flows into our own lives. And that’s true. If we’re self-serving, we’ll never experience the fullness of joy in our lives.

Again, I ask you, What is the purpose of your life? Do you have a mission statement for yourself and your family? Scott and Phyllis did. They talked to us about their deep desire and concern for their children to grow up and to live the life we just looked at in the Book of Ephesians. That was what they wanted for their family. They had a mission statement for their family and for themselves.

And now I will be sharing from a different perspective. I’ll be speaking from Scott’s perspective, and Phyllis’s. Over the past two years the Lord has blessed Myrna and me with the privilege of walking close to Scott and Phyllis, sharing with them in their pain and their struggles that they faced. We heard their prayers; we saw the compassion of their hearts. We felt it. And I’m going to share with you today the deepest desires and burdens of their hearts.

Number one, they were deeply burdened for the lack of Christian love between individuals and families and churches in this community. Deeply burdened. I invite you to turn in the Gospel of John. As we sat around and shared with the family the past few days, one of the things that are very precious to the family was their last conversations with Scott and Phyllis and Amos and Shayla and Christina. We cling to those last conversations. We draw comfort from them. Well, Jesus had some last words too. We’d better be following what He had to say if we’re planning to go to glory.

John 17, verses 20 through 25. The setting here is Jesus praying, just prior to his night in Gethsemane. The cross lay before Him. He was alone with God. He was praying for you, for me. Notice what He said: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one; [and notice how do we give a testimony that shows the world around us what it means to be Christians, to be a child of God – it’s unity] and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” It is love and unity that give a testimony of who we are – the children of God. Why is there so much fragmentation in the body of Christ when we are called to love and unity?

Secondly, Scott and Phyllis were deeply burdened for the souls of their friends and relatives who have not surrendered their lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ. If you’re one of those people, I want you to know that they cared about you. They loved you. They were praying fervently for you. Don’t delay another day. Surrender to Jesus Christ today. That was their deepest burden for their friends and relatives. They loved you and cared about you. Don’t let them die in vain.

As I said earlier, Scott and Phyllis were deeply burdened about the strained and broken marriages in our conservative church communities. Terrible. God intended that our marriages be a glowing light that also shows the world around us what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. That’s what we are called to in our marriages. And we have an adversary that would tear it down. If our marriages are not what God intended them to be, the adversary is winning and we’re losing. The church is losing.

The fourth thing that they were deeply burdened about was the lack of missionary vision in our circles. Scott challenged me so much in that area that sometimes I almost grew weary of it. He’d tell me, “Philip, you’ve got to go share with this person, you’ve got to reach this person, you’ve got to reach that person, and we’ve got to reach out before it’s too late.” To Scott, every person he met was a living soul that needed Jesus Christ before he came to eternity. That’s how he viewed everyone he met. I was so challenged by the way they could see beyond our exterior and see our hearts. And the compassion they had for us. Even when we disagreed with them, they loved us. They loved us. Every person they saw as a living soul that needed salvation through Jesus Christ.

Let’s turn in our Bibles to Matthew, Chapter 28. I just want to call us back again to what I said earlier, we are going to cling to the last words that Scott and Phyllis and Amos and the children shared with us. And I want to point you to the last words Jesus shared with His followers. Not only should we be clinging to them, they should be the rule and guide for our lives, for our churches. Verses 16 through 20. Just prior to His ascension, Jesus had the disciples together. “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they

worshipped him: but some doubted. And when Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power . . .” [Here we are again to that same power. It’s authority. Jesus is saying here if we study this in the Greek, a slightly power than what we looked at before. He is saying authority. And Jesus Christ is head of the church. He has authority to tell us how we should function as churches and as Christians. And this is what He said we need to be doing.] “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [and notice verse 20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” That is Jesus Christ’s commission to His church. And if we don’t have that vision, we’ll bite and devour and divide.

Let’s turn over to the Book of Acts. Again we have some last words of Jesus before He ascended. Acts 1:6-9, “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” They came to Jesus, like Nicodemus, and they had a question. They didn’t get the answer they were looking for. Jesus said it’s not for you to know the times, when it’s going to take place. But, He said, instead of worrying about that, I have work for you to do. You be busy in that work, and the rest of it will fall in place, under the direction of the Father. Notice what He says, “But ye shall receive power [here we are again – power] after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you [He told them to wait until Pentecost when that took place] and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” If Jesus were here today, He’d say, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me in Dayton, in Rockingham County, and Virginia, and United States, and in every country in the world. I’m not saying He’s calling all of us to move, but He’s calling all of us to be witnesses.

If Jesus Christ has worked in your life, you have a testimony. And if you don’t have a testimony, you’d better be getting one before He calls you from time to eternity. You better be sharing your testimony or getting one, one of the two. That’s what we are called to do, because we’re called as a church to share the message of the Gospel. This is the primary call of the church of Jesus Christ. And when we lose that vision, we begin to bite and devour one another. Our love grows cold and we have divisions. I love church history, and I challenge you. You can start right here in Acts 1 and study the history of the church right up until July of 2007, and you will find that when the church has vision for reaching lost souls, there’s unity and there’s growth. And when we lose that vision for missions, the love goes cold. We bite and devour each other and there are divisions, and love is gone. Study your history; it’s true. We can’t change it.

The challenge I’d like to have for each of you here today . . . I know we’re here from many different backgrounds and denominations. The one that I’m most familiar with, the one I’m part of is the Anabaptists. We’ve gotten so far away from what the early Anabaptist vision was that we’re hardly recognizable anymore as Anabaptists. Menno Simons himself wrote these words: “All those who are born of God, who are gifted with the Spirit of the Lord, who are according to the Scriptures called into one

body and a love of Christ Jesus are prepared by such love to serve their neighbors, not only with money and goods, but also after the example of their Lord and head, Jesus Christ, in evangelical manner, with life and blood.” We give a lot of lip service to Menno Simons, but he was a missionary. Let’s not forget it.

Moving on, As Anabaptists we embrace love and nonresistance. We take the Sermon on the Mount as the foundation for our rule and guide for life. Jesus taught that we love all men all over the world. What’s the greatest expression of love we can show to someone else? I’ll answer it for you. It’s pointing that person to Jesus Christ. To simply not fight back when we’re hurt is only going half way. But true nonresistance says that person has a living soul, and I want to point that soul to Jesus Christ. The concept of love also influenced the Anabaptists greatly in their missionary vision. As nonresistance was love’s negative expression, missions became its positive affirmation. The Anabaptists took the Great Commission seriously, and the Great Commission of the verses that I read from Matthew 28. They believed it was binding upon all true disciples of Jesus Christ in every age. That’s what they believed. The Anabaptists made a major theological point from what the Commission implies. How much more must they have felt compelled to obey its explicit teachings? And obey they did. Few countries in Europe were without some Anabaptist witness. Into the valleys and the cities and the highways and byways they spread on the Continent and into England with a burning conviction and a zeal to preach, teach, baptize, suffer, and die for Christ’s sake. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

It goes on to say – and this is a sad chapter in our history – that in the early days the Hutterites were the most evangelical of us all, and now they are the least. But an early Hutterite wrote this when someone challenged him on why they lived the way they lived. His name was Claus Felbinger. In his confession of faith he gave an admirable statement concerning the missionary motivation of the Hutterites. “We’ve been asked by sundry people why we have come into the prince’s land to draw people away. My answer is we do not go into this land, but into all lands wherever our language is known. For where God opens a door for us and shows us zealous hearts that truly seek Him, hearts that are discontented with the Godless life of the world and would gladly do what is right, there we go. For we have divine cause to do so. For heaven and earth are the Lord’s and all men are His. For we have given and surrendered and sacrificed ourselves wholly to God. Where He sends us and will use us there we go in obedience to divine will regardless of what we must suffer and endure.” When we have that kind of vision, there’s going to be unity among the believers. And there’s going to be blessing.

I need to move on. We were close to Scott and Phyllis, and I heard this more than once from them. As they shared their deep burden for these four things that I just shared with you, they told us that they were convinced that it may take a tragedy in this community to bring it to pass. They told us that.

John 15:13, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Phyllis, Amos, Shayla, Christina did that for Scott. But I think in the bigger picture, they willingly did it for all of us, for this larger community. Jim Elliott was a

man who gave his life carrying the Gospel to a savage people. Before his death he made this statement – it rings throughout time. He said a man is no fool who gives what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose. That means the man is no fool who lays down his earthly life to gain eternal life. We are going to lose this life one way or the other. We can't keep it. But when we lose it in such a way that it's for a service for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, there's gain that lasts through eternity. I believe Scotts would have been willing to give their lives if they knew that this would lead to the answer for their burdens and their prayers.

The tragedy Scott and Phyllis felt may need to take place in order to bring this community has occurred. And I've been hearing testimonies from people from the grave digging to everything else that's going. This community has come together and they've worked together in unity and love and laid down our petty differences. And that was the desire of their hearts. That's what they wanted. They would be pleased to see the outpouring of love and support that I've seen in these last three days. God answered their prayers.

And now the challenge is for us. How are we going to respond? Are we going to slip back in our old ways and continue on as we have in the past? Or are we going to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us – everyone of us – into the loving, compassionate, fervent Christians that God would have us to be? The ball's in our court, the choice is ours. They gave the sacrifice. Let's take it seriously.

If you're here today and you're not a Christian, if you have never received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of your life, again I challenge you to do it now. Do it today. Get on your knees. Find a Christian to help you and to lead you to the Lord. If you want to do it in the privacy of your bedroom or your home, take your Bible to the Book of Romans, Chapter 10, and the road to salvation is spelled out there. Romans, Chapter 10, will lead you to Christ and salvation.

If you're here today and the Lord has touched your heart, and you have an interest in becoming a church-going person, I invite you here to this place this coming Sunday. Let's worship together. We'll welcome you with love, because Scotts have taught us how.

If you are here today and you have anything less than fervent Christian love for your fellowman, I have one word for you – repent. Repent. "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." I don't care how many credentials you have, if you don't have love and compassion of Jesus Christ flowing out of your life to your fellowman, you won't make it. You won't make it to heaven. Repent and follow peace with all men.

If you're here today and your marriage is not what it ought to be, if your marriage is growing distant and cold, and maybe you're even separated from your spouse, I have one word for you, "Repent." That is where it always starts, repentance. There is repentance and there is confession, and there is restoration. Whether we are coming to

the Lord or making restoration with our fellowman or our spouse, repentance, confession and restoration. Repent. Get on your knees and cry out to God for forgiveness and for the grace to restore your relationship with your spouse to what it ought to be. Don't wait. It was Scott and Phyllis's burden for you. And I will add this. All the psychologists in the world are not going to bring you together; it's the love of Christ that will bring you together.

Maybe you are here today and you're part of a church that's facing turmoil. Maybe your Christian love has grown cold, and division is imminent. I have one word for you. Repent. Repent. Fall on your knees and cry out to God for forgiveness, because the Book of Proverbs tells us "Only by pride cometh contention." Never forget that verse. When there's contention, remember only by pride cometh contention. That's why there's so much fragmentation.

You remember when Jacob and Esau parted? Jacob was running for his life because Esau had set out to kill him. And he stayed down there and worked for Laban all those years, and finally the time came he knew he had to get out and go back to the land of his father. And Jacob was on the way back, and he was worried sick about what was going to happen when he met his brother Esau. And he divided them up into three groups, and he sent this group on and said this is a gift for my lord Esau. And this is a gift and this is a gift, and he hoped by the time he got there that Esau's anger would be appeased. And what happened when they met? It's beautiful, and it's the answer to church problems. They fell on each other's necks and they wept and they embraced and they forgave and there was restoration. And they buried their father together in peace.

I challenge you if you're here today and you're part of a church that's contemplating division and there's turmoil, follow the example of Jacob and Esau because division never helps anything. Dear deceased brother Justus Showalter made the remark once that in every church division, he fears that souls are lost. I say amen. Amen. Get on your knees, dear ones. Get right with God and with each other. Develop that vision for what the church is to be. You have something to work toward, and you'll pull together. Souls will be saved. Young people will be brought out of confusion and despair and will be given purpose and understanding of what Christianity's all about. Do it, dear ones, do it.

Maybe you're here today and you've lost or never had a vision for reaching lost souls and pointing them to Jesus Christ. Then you're missing the highest calling of the Christian life. Again, I have one word. Repent. Repent and ask the Lord Jesus to fill your heart with love and compassion for your fellowman. So that you, like Scott and Phyllis, every time you meet someone you see that person as a living soul that's either on the road to Heaven or the road to Hell. There's no middle ground. Everyone here today, everyone in this whole universe is on one of those two roads. There's no middle ground. And we need to understand that. Jesus . . . one descriptive word that I find in the Gospels is compassion. Jesus had compassion.

I'm going to look at Matthew 9:35 through 38. And this is talking about Jesus. "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Jesus looked over the multitudes, and His heart was broken. He was moved with compassion because He said they had no direction. They had no direction. He said they're like sheep without a shepherd. And I want to tell you when we shepherds don't dwell together in love and unity, our people scatter. Souls are lost. I call us to unity. It's the only way, the only way. "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." [Amen. The laborers are so few, and it seems they are growing fewer that have that vision for reaching the lost.] "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Jesus is still looking for laborers to send into His harvest field to do His will. Are you willing to go? And I'm not suggesting you pack your suitcase and move across the ocean, although He does call people to do that, and I give them my deepest blessings when they go. But He's calling us to start. Remember, He said Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and uttermost parts of the world. It has to start at home. If we don't have a zeal for reaching souls at home, we're wasting our time to try to go and do it at a distance. It has to start at home. Those were the deep burdens of Scott and Phyllis' hearts.

Another Scripture the family's asked us to share from is in Mark, Chapter 10:13-15. These verses are very fitting when we think about these two dear young girls who passed from earth to heaven on Monday evening. Mark 10:13-15, "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Jesus loved little children, and He often used them as examples and illustrations in His preaching and His teaching. He said "of such is the kingdom of God." We're called to a childlike faith and trust. We're called to follow as a little child follows a parent they trust, holding their hand, leading us along. That's how we're called to follow the Lord Jesus.

Scotts had a deep love for their children and a desire that they would grow up to be fervent Christians. And I can still distinctly remember hearing Scott as we prayed together in small group one night, several times I heard him do this when we prayed together, that Scott would pray – and it didn't come easy for him – sometimes he would get broken up when he would pray this, and he would say, "Dear God, our dear children," and he'd pray for his dear children. That was his deep passion in life that his children would grow up to be fervent Christians, and he was willing to do whatever to lead them in that direction.

And then verse 15 summarizes everything I've said today: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter

therein.” By faith. Childlike trust, faith, and surrender – that is the only way to come to Jesus.

Conclusion: A few more verses I want to read from Ephesians 4: 1 through 16. As I’ve thought about Scott’s and Phyllis’s lives and right after the death, I began to wonder if I’m going to be the one to share that message what would I share? Right away I thought about this passage because I knew their hearts. Pay attention to these words. Paul says, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; [Notice] For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” [Verse 13 was the verse the Lord gave me when I thought about Scott’s funeral] “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” [That was their desire.] “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Love and unity. Again, I call us to a life of love and unity. It’s the only way. It’s the only way.

Again, I just want to remind you that several times Scotts told us that we’re afraid it’s going to take a tragedy in this community to bring us together. And God answered their prayers. They were part of the tragedy. But you know it’s tragic for us, but if the rest of their prayers can be answered, that there can be unity in churches, that divisions can be avoided, that souls can be saved, that marriages can be healed, and that missionary vision can be restored and the churches can once again become the living, thriving, growing organisms that were in the Book of Acts and again in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, it will be worth it all. So the choice is ours. Are we going to go home and continue on as we did before this week? Or are we going to allow this to change our lives, change our hearts, mold us, and shape us so that we can truly be loving, unified children of God?

**Song – “Sweet Hour of Prayer”**

## Sonny Layman

As you were looking at the papers, you were probably wondering who is Sonny Layman? And I wanted to take some time, and it's really amazing Brother Philip, you didn't see my notes, and I didn't see your notes, but God wants to confirm what Brother Philip has said. And I tell my children if they want to have chapel speakers come into our school and they repeat the same message that the previous chapel speaker had spoken, pay attention. It's for somebody, it's for all of us. But if it's not but for one person, praise God. Glory to His name.

My wife Juanita and myself are the children's pastors at the Spring Creek Church of the Nazarene. We're also evangelists, and we rented from the Showalters. I'd like to take time to thank the family for allowing me to share just a little bit. I know there probably everybody in this sanctuary and outside and in the community that could share certainly a lot more than I could, but as the tragedy occurred, I just felt compelled to say something. And I thank you for allowing me to do that.

I'd like to open with prayer: Heavenly Father, I come before you in the name of Jesus Christ, and Father, I pray that the words that would be spoken would fall on fertile ground. Father, I know it's been plowed before me now, and Father, that as your Word sinks deep into the hearts of these good people, Father, that it would bring forth fruit that would be pleasing to You. I thank You and let Your Word once more, O God, and I thank You that it does not return void, that it accomplishes that which is pleasing to You. To You be the glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I remember the first time that I had met the Showalters. I had told Scott that we had a lot in common. I, too, have four daughters, and we shared the love of Jesus Christ. I also shared with him the times that I was challenged to try to use the bathroom with four ladies in the house. I don't know if anybody else has been challenged that way, but I certainly was. And we laughed about that. We shared about our housing situation that we were discussing with the church, and it was amazing God had answered exactly what we had been talking about, only it was not a new dwelling.

Scott was amazed at that because God works at both ends. We're somewhere in the middle, but God knows the beginning before the end, and it's amazing how we've lived and what we've done, how God's plan and purpose is fulfilled in each of our lives if we allow Him to. God, with all His might and power, I'm able to bind His hands because I will say no. Almighty God I can restrain from His planned purpose in my life by not submitting and repenting.

He told me he just wanted someone to take care of it, and I told him that I'd do that. I told him about the situation that we had and he said not to worry about that. I don't think it's important for me to share that right now. I know what a sojourner means not to have a home of your own, but our home's in Heaven. Not that we've made it here. This is good to have your own homes, nothing wrong with that, but we're sojourning on

this journey that we have, and the destination's Heaven, if I allow that to happen by submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Phyllis was concerned about us not having much privacy beyond the farm. I said that wouldn't be a problem; we're used to noise. She also had a concern for our granddaughter who just turned three. And she said, "Be sure she doesn't go above the manure pit." And I said she won't go anywhere without us.

Then we met Scott's mom Reba. We met her at church and Bible study. It's no accident, Reba, that you were there studying exactly what you were studying because God prepared you for that which you're going through right now. She tells us she cleaned the trailer before we moved into it, and we immediately drove close to her. Scott and Phyllis and the girls were full of life, full of joy, and they were full of peace. And Phyllis was an excellent wife and provider for her children and her husband and her family. They were hungry for spiritual truths, and I enjoyed sharing some of those with them. They were excited, and they loved to talk about the Lord. If you're not excited and want to talk about the Lord, you haven't met Him. You haven't had a true change in your heart. As our brother said, we should have a testimony. I say the very same thing. If I don't have a testimony, I'm not saved. If I can't realize in my life what God has done for me, He hasn't done anything because I haven't allowed Him to.

On the lighter side, I recall a time when we needed to replace the shower stall in the master bedroom because the faucet was leaking and I was afraid the floor was being damaged, and sure enough there was some damage to the floor, and he said, "Go ahead and pick whatever you want. Do I need to get a plumber to help you?" I said, "Well I think I can do that." He said, "Well, if you need me I'll help you." Well, I commenced doing that, and I needed some help because the floor and the walls weren't quite square. I'm not a carpenter, but I can bend a nail with the best of them. And we struggled to get that shower stall in there, and it just would not fit. Scott left and he said, "I've got something that'll help us. I don't know what you call it, but I'll be back." He went down to the barn and he came back up and he had a porta-power tool. You can just imagine how big a shower stall is. There were two of us in this shower stall with a porta-power tool. You all know how big a porta-power tool is. The shaft wasn't quite long enough so we had to have a 2 x 4 up on top so we didn't go through the ceiling hopefully. We struggled and fought and finally did get that thing in there. Glory to God. And I turned to him and it was really amazing because we didn't have the two knobs. We had one in the middle, and in all of our shuffling around, the water got turned on. Scott took a shower. And we laughed. I don't know if he was as happy as I was. He got wet, but it was just a humorous situation at that point in time. And I said "Praise God we didn't need any more than two of us to put this shower stall in because we'd have been in trouble. I don't know what we'd have done with the other person.

Phyllis and the girls enjoyed coming to our summer program last year, and we have it again this year—summer school Olympics and they had fun. I shared with them about cup stacking. That's what these are. Somebody had seen me from Berea School and they said, "You're a cup man." I said, "Yes, I'm a cup man." It's something very

simple and basically we can share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with and have fun doing it. As the kids pastor I like to find ways we can have fun knowing the Lord Jesus and knowing God's Word. And the very basic black cup represents sin. We're separated from God because of our sin, but we can be washed with the blood of the Lamb. He died to take our place. And because we can be washed with the blood of the Lamb, we can be pure. Not in our purity, but in His. I'm not holy. I'm nothing, but I'm holy because of what He did for me. And you are too. The reason why we do this is so we can grow in Christ and in His Word and in His fellowship. And that as we do grow, that we'll inherit the kingdom of God and gold cup. And very basic and very simple with that. I had shared that with them, and then I got a little bit puzzled because there's a DVD that goes with it. And I thought well, how are they going to see that? So we invited them over to the house, and I put the DVD in there, and they were really excited about that—so excited that Phyllis had gotten permission for me to go to Berea School and share that with the students that were there. And that was a blessing. And I think those that were there also received a blessing.

Just the latter part of last month we had our vacation Bible school, and again she and the girls attended there. I think they had fun. We had some evangelist friends of ours there kinda crazy like we are, do some unordinary things to get the Gospel message across, and there were souls won to the kingdom of God because of that. There were people that made a decision young and old alike. I'm not going to go into a lot of detail, because I did go into great detail with the family last night, and I don't think that's appropriate at this point, other than one thing I'd like to share with you. There was a reporter that wanted an interview, and we had to leave Tuesday because I had to get away. And we took the family and went on the other side of the mountain. But I want to tell you the Paul Harvey version of that which I had given her, but she neglected to report. Paul Harvey version, if you will. I don't know if any of you have seen it. I want to clarify what I said, and what she did not say. I shared that Scott and Phyllis and the girls shared a very special kind of love for each other. A kind of love that they would die for each other. And the reason they had that kind of love is because they loved the Lord Jesus Christ. Each individually and corporately. That was what drove them to do what they did. And I venture to say that probably everyone of us in here hopefully would do the very same thing. And because of that love, God will sustain you all, He'll get you through it. That was part of the class.

There's a Christian contemporary song by Ray Boltz that the anchor holds in spite of the storm. I don't know if anybody's familiar with that song or not. If you're not, I'd love for you all to at least hear that song. Let's look at the word love. As I teach children I'm in God's Word there's no grandparents or adults in there. He calls us sheep and kids and children. I'm grateful for that because I'll be a kid till I die. And some of you will say you're just nuts. And you're right, but I'm screwed to the right bolt though.

What love is not. It's not wicked, it's not judgmental, it's not jealous, it's not boastful, it's not proud, it's not rude, it demands its own way, it's irritable, it keeps personal record of all wrongs, it rejoices in injustice, it gives up, it boasts, it has no faith, and it has no hope. That's what love is not.

Let's look at what love is, and if you have your Bibles, in 1 Corinthians 13 this is a passage of Scripture that's often read at wedding ceremonies. And now that you know what love is not, let's see what love is according to what God said. I'm reading out of the New Living Translation so it might be a little bit different than what you're familiar with:

If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making a meaningless noise, like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? If I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I had to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it, but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever. Love is patient, love is kind, love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up. Love never loses its faith. It's always hopeful and endures throughout every circumstance. Every circumstance. Love will be forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. Now we know only for a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little, but when the end comes, the special gifts will all disappear. It is like this, when I was a child I spoke as a child, thought, and reasoned as a child, but when I grew up I put away my childish things. Now we see things imperfectly as a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely just as God knows me now. There are three things that will endure: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love. That's what God's Word says about love. Love is not something that I have for myself, but something I can give to someone else.

As events took place, my wife had no idea what was going on, only that there was something radically wrong. Phyllis and the girls ran down beside us, and Phyllis threw me the phone and said "Call 911." None of them were thinking about the circumstances or the danger. They were on a mission. They were going to save their daddy and husband. Then I gave the phone to my daughter to call while I ran down right behind them. Phyllis is a fast runner. Girls, your sisters were fast runners. I'm a fast runner, but they beat me, except you all. I'm glad you can't outrun me. My youngest daughter normally would not have been there. We play volleyball at our church on Monday nights – ten minutes to seven we were leaving. That's when all this happened. Needless to say, we didn't play volleyball.

What I saw when I got there certainly was not what I expected. I could not believe what I was seeing, and it took all that I could do to keep Brooklyn from the same thing. And I'm glad I did. God has a plan and a purpose for you, and it wasn't the same plan and purpose for your mom and your dad and sisters. He's got something very special for you and your sister. I don't know what it is, but He'll reveal it to you.

I had told my daughter Brandy to take them up to Juanita; our granddaughter had just got done playing with them five minutes before all this happened. As I stood over the pit, I wanted to go down after them, but there were two things that restrained me. Somebody shared with me yesterday there was another thing that restrained me. But I wasn't aware of that, I was looking through my carnal eyes, not my spiritual eyes. One of the things, we couldn't find a rope long enough. I didn't know how deep it was, I didn't know what the situation was. The other was the loving words of my daughter as she left and took the girls up to my wife and when to help, she said, "Daddy, don't go in there." I stood on the manifold and I tried to hook Phyllis's arm with a grate that just so happened to be there where I was. I didn't know what it was at the time. She was the only one visible. I was unsuccessful, and she was unresponsive.

At that time I cried out to Jesus. I was helpless. There was nothing I could do, but cry out to Jesus. The first rescue worker that arrived on the scene heard me still crying out to Jesus. He thought I was upset and needed to sit down. But I said no. He didn't understand what I was doing. He didn't have any spiritual antennas. He wasn't looking through spiritual eyes either. But I knew it was over. They fell asleep in the manure pit, but they woke up in heaven, together as a family, worshiping the God they loved and served, waiting for us to be reunited with them at the banqueting table and to rejoice over what God has been able to do through and in the circumstances. God is unlimited when I wanted Him. Scott wanted to share with his brothers and sisters about how he felt differently about his relationship with Jesus, and I told him that I could give him numerous Scriptures, but often that can turn into an argument and divides rather than unites. Man's doctrine is not necessarily God's doctrine. We have a way of making it say and do what we want it to do at any one appropriate time. God said in His Word there were only Jews and Gentiles, saved and unsaved. We have been adopted into God's family if we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. I tell our kids and everyone I come in contact with, if there is anybody here within the sound of my voice that if you have been adopted into the family you are now residing in, thank God for that. You are special. Tell yourself you are special. God has adopted us into His family. We've been grafted into the divine. If you've been adopted into a family, that person loved you enough to give you their name and to provide the things that you need. You are special if you are adopted.

There's a big difference between having Jesus as my Saviour and having Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. If He's my Lord and Saviour, I'm going to tell somebody about Jesus. If He's just my Saviour, I'm thankful that He saved me, but He said that His desire is that none should perish – not one – that all should come to repentance and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's God's will. I believe that if Scott could come back and speak to us right now, that he might say something like this – yes, I know about his burden for his brothers and sisters – he shared that with me as well. He wanted them to experience what he did – new birth in Jesus – and the work and filling of the Holy Spirit.

In the Book of Acts, Chapter 9, Paul experienced conversion. When we read about the Apostle Paul, we have to remember that he was Saul of Tarsus before he was

the Apostle Paul. And he was persecuting the Christians in the church, and he thought he was doing God's will because of the teachings he had experienced. He had a great teacher who taught him wrong. On the road to Damascus while he was en route to persecute some other Christians, he had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, and he was never the same. He looked the same perhaps outside, but he was never the same inside. God changes our hearts, not our physical beings. It's an inside event. At that time Saul of Tarsus became Paul. He was more zealous of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ than he ever was in persecuting the church when he was Saul of Tarsus. He had a hundred and eighty degree turnaround. He was a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Time is short, and I plead with the church to talk about what we have in common with the Lord Jesus Christ, not our differences, not the denominational barriers. Those are walls that separate, not unite. I've entertained this conversation with other pastors in other denominations, and I have been successful in some; some turn a deaf ear. It's God's church, not man's church. We can agree to disagree. We're a diverse people. We are all diversified – that's for a purpose. Otherwise, everybody would like purple and blue—that's what I like.

Religion won't save us. In fact, religion will get us in trouble. The Sadducees and the Pharisees had religion. They didn't have Jesus. Your membership in a church won't save you. Why not? Being a board member or a choir member won't save us. The fact that we go to the same church that our mother and father and our grandparents go to won't save us. The fact that you may have built this very church that we're sitting in will not save you. The fact that you are a good person will not save you. I know a lot of good people that unless they change their ways they are going to a place called Hell, which was not prepared for them. It was prepared for the angels and Lucifer when he tried to exalt himself above God almighty. But many people are on that wide road that leads to destruction.

The only thing that will save us is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Confess Him with your mouth – Jesus is Lord – the Bible says you shall be saved. But don't stop there. Let's go on to dessert. Most of us like dessert. It's like those of us who like a second helping and never get it. Don't stop at just being saved. You're missing the most important thing. Yes, you're going to Heaven, but God has something more important for you to do than just get to Heaven. He wants you to bring somebody with you. Believe that He is the Son of God, that He died for your sins. John 3:16 tells us "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Look to your neighbors and say, "I'm one of those whosoever." Because we are. We're one of those whosoever. That wasn't for somebody over in Africa or China or anywhere else exclusively. We're all of "whosoever." You and I are to be doers of the Word, not just hearers of the Word.

And I, too, would challenge someone if you haven't had a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ if you're trying to get to Heaven on your mama's skirt or because of whatever reason, the only way to get there is acknowledge Jesus Christ for who He is, acknowledge that you're a sinner, repent of that, be washed in the blood of the

Lamb, be sanctified wholly, live a holy life. The Holy Spirit will help you to do that. When Jesus left, He said I'm going to the Father. He's preparing a place for us. They're doing it right now. They're walking on those streets of gold. They know how big that pearly gate is. I don't know how big it is, it's got to be a humongous thing. I don't know; they know right now. And they're waiting for us. Take advantage of what their burden was that through a tragedy that one soul would be saved. I would like to think it would be more than one. I would like it to be said of me that though I go through all my life and I don't touch but one soul for the Lord Jesus Christ, praise His name. I'd like to think it's more than one, but if it's not but one, praise God. That's one less to go to Hell.

(Change sides of tape. Probably some missing)

## John Hartzler

The family gave me a couple of little writings that the girls had written and asked that we read them, so, just briefly, Christina had written this at Thanksgiving time, entitled “The Lord’s Goodness.”

The Lord is good. He is good to me.  
 He’s even good to the birds in the tree.  
 He made everything so shiny and neat—  
 Daisies, buttercups, and lilies so sweet.  
 He cares for me and you, you see,  
 When you’re in fights with your sisters three.  
 He gives us clothes, He gives us beds  
 To sleep in and rest our heads.  
 He gives us Moms, He gives us Dads,  
 Who comfort us when we are sad.  
 He gives us fresh water to drink,  
 He’s so precious – don’t you think?

Shayla – a little poem.

Curious kittens peek inside  
 The old log where they like to hide.  
 Kittens pounce and jump for joy  
 On balls of yarn and a squeaky toy.  
 The cutest thing you’ve ever seen –  
 Kittens lick their whiskers clean.  
 Sleepy kittens curl up small  
 Into a warm and fuzzy ball.

And then she wrote for a school paper about her daddy.

I like my Dad because he buys me pets. And Dad goes out in the morning and feeds the cows and calves. Sometimes he lets me feed the calves. My Dad picks on me too. My Dad is a good dad because he lets me ride in the combine and on the tractor with him when harvest time comes.

My Dad reads me Bible stories in the evening. My Dad is a person who lives for God and takes his family to church. My Dad also spansks me when I am bad so that when I grow up, I won’t be a spoiled person.

Tuesday morning fairly early I was looking into the Scriptures briefly and the Lord showed me a verse that was very interesting. It may not all apply to this setting. The background is in Ezekiel, Chapter 14, verse 23, or the last several verses there. The background is that because of the sin of Israel God said I will have to bring judgment on the people of Israel because of their sin. But He said there will be a remnant, a few – and

He implied young people – who will follow the Lord. And He said you will see their ways and their doings and you will be comforted by what you see in their lives. I'm putting it in my words. He repeats it again and he says you will be comforted by their ways and their doings, by their lives. And then he said, I want you to know that what I have done is not without cause. I thought that was a very interesting Scripture as it fit for Scott and Phyllis and their family.

I think we have heard and seen – all of us – enough that we are sure that what God has done is not without cause.

Shall we kneel for prayer: Our Father in Heaven, we know that Thou art the all-wise God and the all-knowing One, and therefore what You bring or allow in our lives is for our good and to bring about what You have for us. And since You are the all-powerful One, You can work all things together for our good and for the good of each person. Father, again here today we acknowledge Your greatness, Your omniscience, Your omnipotence. We acknowledge that what You have brought to pass in this family is not without cause. It's for our good, and for Your glory. Father, help us to submit ourselves to You fully, to commit our lives to You anew that You can work in us what You have for us, that You can work Your way in our lives to bring us to Yourself. We pray again for the grieving family, that Your grace, Your comfort, Your strength might be with them in the days to come, that You would guide them and draw them to Yourself. We pray especially for the two that are left. Father, we pray that You would bless their young lives, that You'd help them to find You someday as their Lord and Saviour and to follow in the path of their parents. And now, Father, we again give ourselves to You and ask that You would direct our lives, that You would bless us and keep us in Your way until Jesus returns. Help us to be faithful that we might all be ready when the trumpet sounds. We pray, too, for the rescue personnel and others who witnessed the tragedy, that You would bring grace and comfort to their hearts. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

The families wish to give a special invitation to the Marvin Showalter, Harvey Martin, John Burkholder, Roy Rhodes families, pallbearers, travelers, special friends, and all who wish to share the evening meal and fellowship in the church basement. After the service in the cemetery, we are asking that those that are coming back for supper would please enter at the door of the rear of the auditorium here, not the basement door. Enter here, go down the steps into the basement, get your food, and then go out into the tent outside here. The immediate family will eat in the basement.

May the Lord bless you.