

## **198833 missionarymenfellowshipofcanada**

We're very happy to see those that have assembled with us this morning. Looks like a lot of empty benches, but then it's a warm morning and it's early. And we welcome you this morning to our MMF meeting that we have planned.

And we trust that the information and the inspiration of this hour will be a blessing to each one. And we do welcome you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Shall we just bow in a word of prayer? Our Father in heaven, we come to thee this morning so happy that we can call thee our Father.

We thank thee for what thou hast done for us. We thank thee for the camp and for the blessings that we have been experiencing. And we pray today, Father, that this might be no exception.

But as we meet together as a group this morning, and we as men of the missionary church have our projects and our aims and objectives, we pray, Father, that thou wilt challenge each man across our conference, that we might be the leaders that we should be in our homes, in our communities, and in our churches, that we might be effective in our witness to draw many into the kingdom. We pray, Father, for this hour that thou wilt grace us with thy presence. And Father, as we listen to the request at the breakfast table this morning of our brother Vine from Palmerston, we pray right now for his parents and his wife on their way to Montreal or to Quebec, that thou wilt be with them.

Give them a safe trip. And then we pray that thou wilt be with our brother in the hospital. And the results of this accident, we ask, Lord, that thy presence will be very near and very real to him, that thou wilt meet every need, and that thou wilt undertake as those in charge who are ministering to him and trying to help.

And Father, others, as they travel today, we pray for traveling mercies. Will thou protect them on the highways? And as they go various places in various directions, that they might be conscious of a God who cares and one to whom they can put their trust. Father, we commit this service to thee.

Bless John as he speaks to us. And each part of this service, we ask that thou wilt own it for thy name's sake. And each one will receive a blessing.

In thy name we pray. Amen. Let's sing some choruses together in your brown book, number 40.

This is the day the Lord has made. He's made every day. And it is up to us to decide what we're going to do with those days as well.

Number 14, and we'll sing it twice. All hail King Jesus. He is Lord, this Jesus.

Sticky, let's stand and sing this because it is what Jesus is, majesty. You may be lead us in our

scripture reading at this time. Good morning.

I just made it in time. This morning, our reading is from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter two. And it's verses one through 16.

It's the whole chapter. And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or wisdom proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature, a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.

But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory, the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood. For if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But just as it is written, things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.

For to us, God revealed them through the spirit, for the spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, the thoughts of God, no one knows except the spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

But a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he should instruct him, but we have the mind of Christ.

And may God add his blessing to the reading of his word this morning. Thank you, Ross. Well, thank you for coming this morning.

We're a small group, but we certainly can be mighty in the eyes of the Lord if our hearts are right with God this morning. And we just give you the thanks for coming out this morning that we might praise the Lord together. Just a few announcements before we talk about what I wanted to talk about with you this morning, about the Missionary Men's Fellowship.

This fall, we have our rally on October the 14th and 15th in Guelph again at the conference grounds. We're having our Missionary Men's Fellowship rally on Friday evening on the 14th and on the Saturday morning and the afternoon. And we have a special speaker with us this year that each of you men I'm sure will be interested in, and that is that we have Leonard DeWitt

coming all the way from California, from his church in California, to join us for that evening and the next day.

And I'm sure that each of you will want to hear the words of the Lord as laid upon his heart. And so we ask you to join with us this fall in what will turn out to be, I think, a very exciting day. And within the next few weeks, your churches will be receiving some advertising and some information.

And Gord Bolander is always faced with a difficult problem when it comes to that day and that service that we have because we have room for about 300 men. And usually Gord asks you to get your reservations in as early as possible so that he's able to plan for that. And inevitably, we get a lot of them in about the 11th and a half hour, which makes it somewhat difficult.

So if I can just encourage each of you men this morning that when you see this advertising in your church, would ask you if you would please to respond to your MMF contact men as quickly as possible, because certainly with Leonard DeWitt, we do expect to be absolutely sold out this year. So if I will just ask each of you to remember that, October the 15th, 14th and 15th, Leonard DeWitt speaking to us in the Guelph Conference Grounds. Also, just to remind each of you that we have talked, I guess, at a number of our meetings and at the Canadian Missionary Church Assembly about what is transpiring in the new churches.

The church in Oakville and the church in South River are going ahead. They're beginning their construction projects this fall in September, and they are still in need of some physical laborers. If you have certain skills and talents in the area of construction, they would be very much appreciated.

And if you're like me and you can hardly hold a hammer, I'm sure we can find something for you to do as well. So if you would see any one of us as the Missionary Men's Fellowship Executive here today, we'd be glad to add your name to the list if you'd make yourself available for a weekend or a Saturday, that we could use your services this fall in the construction of these two churches as we glorify God together. And it's a good time of fellowship and fun together as well as just going out there and laboring for the Lord.

So please think of that and consider that prayerfully in the days ahead, and we would need your help this fall. We're not going to take up a formal offering today, but the ushers will be glad to hand out to you some envelopes for the Missionary Men's Fellowship. And if the Lord leads you, would ask you to just leave that envelope in a bucket as you leave the auditorium this morning and contribute to some of the works that we enter into in support of our churches and support of some of the missions work as we raise funds to that cause.

What I wanted to speak to you about this morning, and I realize that we are a small group, so I asked some of my family to come along so I could double the size of the group that was going to be here on Saturday morning. So I'm just pleased to have them with us this morning. My wife and I had an opportunity to sleep in Collingwood last night and to enjoy some fellowship

together over dinner so we could get here early and I could be well-rested, but I was happy too that my son and his girlfriend were able to join us this morning, and we're pleased to have him with us.

I certainly am that he would think enough of his father to come and listen to him this morning because he has to listen to me every day at home. About a month ago at the Missionary Men's Fellowship, we had an opportunity to listen to Reverend Alan Andrews, who is the Director of the Navigators of Canada and responsible within the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada for Vision 2000. Some of you may have heard about Vision 2000, which is really a plan by the Evangelical Fellowship to encourage evangelical churches to participate in the work of evangelism in the years ahead and to develop a plan and strategies that each church might go out with a definite direction and a definite plan to evangelize this nation of Canada that we all live in and that we're so proud of.

But as I listened to him that Saturday morning and as he spoke to the men, he really touched my heart. One of the things that he said to us, I guess, was very important, I think, to each one of us as evangelicals in 1988 that I think that I want to remind each of you this morning of, and he gave us some statistics, some research that was done by the EFC. And one of the things that they looked at was Canada in 1946, just after the war, what happened on a Sunday morning was that two-thirds of all Canadians attended church.

So, if you attended church in 1946, and I was probably in church but a little too young to remember what it was all about, but two-thirds, you were clearly part of a majority of Canadians that were attending church in 1946. And further research showed that about 40 percent of those people read their Bible at least once during the course of the week. Now, that's not a lot, but they at least read their Bible at one occasion during the course of the following week.

But in 1966, he mentioned to us that the same research bore out that only about one-third of Canadians were attending church on a Sunday morning, and that about 20 percent of those people read their Bible at least once during the course of the week. So, you can see the relationship in those numbers that we've lost about two-thirds of the people that were attending church in those 20 years, but clearly about half of them are still reading their Bible at least on one occasion during the course of the week. But more disconcerting, I guess, are the statistics that gave us for 1986, because in 1986, we find that only 25 percent of Canadians are attending church on Sunday morning, and that only about 9 percent of those people are reading their Bible at least once per week.

Now, understand the relationship between the number of people attending church. I'm sure you're like me and very concerned that those brothers and sisters and neighbors of ours are no longer going to church, that clearly three-quarters of the people are not attending church, so we are certainly in a majority. But most importantly, the number of people that are now seeing the Bible as important, even of those attending church, has declined very dramatically.

And I guess I ask the question, which is, why do so few of our friends and neighbors not see the Christian faith offer something different and better as a way of life in 1988? You know, there was another statistic which he gave us that we need to keep in mind, too. We tend to be an older group this morning. By the way, older now is anybody about my age 40 plus, just so that we can clarify that.

The younger people in the research, between the ages of 16 and 29 in 1986, only about 15 or 16 percent of them are going to church, and only about 4 percent of them read their Bible at least once per week. And that's a very disconcerting piece of information for us, because that tells us that if we project that out and look ahead to the next 10 or 20 years and the next generation or two, that we're only going to have about 15 or 16 percent of the population even attending church. And the weakness by which the Bible is perceived is not going to be much help to the group that is there.

So I ask us this morning that we need to look at ourselves in all of this. I think we've had a habit of looking to the world and saying, what's going on out there in the wide world that we all participate in on a day-by-day basis? But I think we need to look inward at ourselves and say, what's happened to us as evangelical Christians in our practice today that suddenly the Bible is no longer an important tool to us to practice our faith? And I guess I believe when we look at Christianity that I think personally that Christianity, the Christian faith, demands people with passion. Oh, I know we're to be humble in spirit, but we need people with excitement if we're going to lead others.

How is it possible for us to encourage people of the world to want to share the faith that we have if we're not excited about it and we're not enthused about it? Why would anybody want more problems? And I guess I look at that this morning and ask each of you, do you have a passion for saving souls? I know what's happened to my own life in the last two years, and I guess I just can't stop witnessing to people at work no matter where I go, but boy, the Lord gives me a blessing. And I must admit to you this morning that it's really become a passion, one that sometimes I have to turn myself off of and wonder whether I'm offending people, but I keep seeing the Lord laying souls in front of me who need to be witnessed here. And I think we need to quit being spectators and we start to start being players, that Christianity isn't just a life of contemplation, but it's a life of action.

The Great Commission, we were called to do something. We weren't called just to pray and to fast. We were called to go out into the world and to talk and to teach to others about what our Lord leads us to.

So it's a very aggressive action that we need to be encouraged into as Christians in this faith, and we're called to penetrate the culture around us, called to go into the world, and called to make disciples of every living creature. And you know, I think the Lord Jesus Christ knew that the one single barrier that each of us has to this Great Commission is cowardliness. And I think he was concerned about the cowardliness of his church.

The greatest barrier to expansion of the church was and still is intimidation. Jesus understood that we, you and I, need courage. There must be a power behind us and in us if our church life and our witness is to be effective.

When Ross read the scripture that I chose this morning, he talked about the power of the Holy Spirit. When I look at that power of the Holy Spirit and I look at the statistics that I gave you this morning, and I wonder how we as Christian brothers and sisters can possibly have a powerful spiritual life when nine percent of us are reading the gospel only once per week. How can we possibly be in obedience to our Lord and Savior when that many of us are concerned about his word? I don't know whether you've ever thought about it before, but I believe Christ called us to a life of courage.

I believe each one of us has to exhibit courage in our life. But did you know that in order to have courage, you have to have fear? You can't have one without the other. To do something which requires no courage, requires no fear, you can't have courage.

So fear, that's right, is in order to have courage, you have to first possess fear. And it's not courageous unless you do possess it. And yet I believe this morning that as I share with you, and I entitled this discussion with you this morning, this teaching, that Satan has set up before each of us the greatest single barrier to our Christian faith and to our own sanctification, and that's our own fears.

And I believe he uses that in the church today. And those statistics that I gave you demonstrate very clearly his success in winning this battle. He has put fear in the hearts of all of our Christian brothers and sisters, so much so that only 9% of us are reading the Bible on a weekly basis, much less a daily basis.

And I know when Reverend Andrews talked, he talked about a group of pastors that he had met with, and he asked them questions about if the problem is in us as Christians, and it's not in the world, but it's in us as Christians, how many people in your church would you say are truly living a holy, righteous life, where on a daily basis they are spiritually right with the Lord, they are praying, they are reading their word, and they are fasting as we're called to do. And the pastors said to him that they thought maybe 1 or 2% of their congregation truly shared in perfect obedience to the Lord's call. And I guess to me that's a very, very scary kind of a number.

That means when I did some statistical calculations that about 40 to 60,000 evangelicals, and there are about 2 million in Canada, truly are exploring sanctification in their life and endeavoring to aspire to holiness or pursue holiness. That's a very small number. And then I go back and I looked at this passage of Scripture that Paul was talking to the church in Corinth.

And in that passage of Scripture that we read this morning, he was talking about three types of men in the world. He was talking about the Adamic man, the unrenewed man, the man who has never received the Spirit of God, never had a renewed heart. And then he talked about the renewed man as being spirit-filled and walking in the Spirit in full communion with God.

But the third man that he was talking about in the church in Corinth was the man who was renewed, but he was still walking according to his sinful nature, and he remained just a babe in Christ. Now, this man or natural man or worldly man or fleshly man, and you've heard all of those terms for that Christian. He may be learned, he may be gentle, he may be eloquent, he may be fascinating to each of us when we look at him, and yet the scriptural content of Scripture is absolutely hidden from him because he's not spirit-filled.

And you're going to say this morning that, but John, the Bible promises me that when my heart is renewed that the Spirit is given to me and my heart is quickened and that Spirit is quickened in me. But I contend that if you don't practice the pursuit of holiness, of sanctification, and aspire to righteousness in your life, that Spirit is very much unquickened, if you will, and it can't grow, and you can't grow. And I believe that the Christian church, as we know at the evangelical church, is suffering from that this morning.

And I guess I look around me at the missionary church, I look at the missionary church, and this is a personal observation, as much like the church in Corinth, I've had an opportunity the last couple of months to go out and to worship in a number of different churches across Canada, mostly missionary churches. We were in Western Canada last week and had the opportunity to go to Red Deer. And over the next couple of months, I trust that Joan and I are going to have the opportunity to worship in a few more missionary churches because I guess I am personally intrigued with the different styles of worship in the missionary church.

I am intrigued with those churches who seem to have a renewed heart, who seem to be very Spirit-filled, and I've asked the Lord to lay on my heart the reasons for this, and that's part of the reason, I guess, I chose this this morning. But as I go around, I notice individuals in these groups and in these churches, they come to me, and they're sort of anxious to fit my experience into their experience or their personal party mold of what they think of where the Holy Spirit should be. And I think that's very much like the Corinthian church.

It may have been a renewed church or charismatic church, whatever we want to put on it as a title, but it had all the strengths and weaknesses associated with that word. And yet there were people in that church that were renewed hearts, but they simply didn't have a quickened spirit, and they weren't able to discern the spiritual truth. And I think Paul reminds us and reminds his friends what it means to be guided and given power in this passage by the Spirit.

He was concerned, as I am this morning and I hope you are, about your Christian brothers and sisters who are worldly or fleshly Christians. And he reminds us that even though he was a great spiritual leader too, that he came to them with fear and trepidation. But he also reminds us as we listen to him and as we read his words, that he was able to overcome this through the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of God through him.

So we can see Paul as a model for us that he overcame his fear and turned it into courage by the possession of the power of the Holy Spirit. And then again, as I look at the evangelical church, and I've studied it over the last two or three years, certainly even in conjunction with

the direction that we want to take our missionary men's fellowship, I look at that evangelical church and I expressed in an article about the concern that I had for the number of milk-fed Christians that we have in our midst, the people who don't have the passion for souls and the passion for Christ. And I become concerned as I see the church putting forth strategies now for sanctification, for evangelization and revival, because I see people who don't have the knowledge becoming involved in something that God calls us to have that knowledge first.

And we need an act of obedience to not be milk-fed Christians. Because I believe if we're going to strike out and look at, and we're going to search out the hearts of our neighbors, that we need to be spirit-filled as Paul talked to the Corinthian church. And I asked myself a number of questions here.

Why is it that there are few leaders in our churches today? That's a North America phenomena in the churches. There are very few leaders left in our churches. Why is it that the leaders that we have are falling to moral issues and things of the world are destroying them in droves? You've read the paper over the last two or three years.

I need not point out names. You worship in the missionary church. You've seen what happened to some of our own leaders.

Why is it that families are splitting apart in this world, in this country, in record numbers? Why is it that thousands of unborn children are being murdered on an annual basis in our society? Why is it that drugs are destroying the minds of our people? Why is it that sexual perversions are running rampant in our society? And why is it that we have a society that is absolutely and completely consumed with itself? And I believe that even in the missionary church of Canada, that that paradox between what we profess and what we practice is a major problem for us as Christians that we need to be aware of and we need to look at ourselves for. Because why is our faith, the faith of the many who claim to be born again, not making an impact on this church, on all evangelical churches? You heard the statistics. They're not mine.

They belong to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. They're from research that is valid. We're not making an impact on the evangelical church.

And I, in some of the background studies, picked out, I guess, a phrase that was used by a German pastor, which he called it cheap grace. And I guess cheap grace, so that we understand it, means that the perception that current evangelical society has that Christianity offers only a flood of blessings, the rights of the kingdom, without any responsibilities or any accountability to the king. An emphasis, as I call it, on salvation and salvation only.

And we are forgetting the next part of the process, which is sanctification, which the Bible, which God calls us to constantly. And that is borne out by the statistics, which I read to you this morning. And this easy believism fails to take the biblical truth to heart and fails to act in obedience to the scriptures.

And the result is that we have a church, an evangelical church, which increasingly accepts and accommodates secular values. And I must point out here that you say, well, John, we don't do that in the missionary church or in my church. We don't accept secular values.

But you know, when you're not studying the word, those secular values just simply creep in very slowly and they're unbeknownst to you as they enter the church. And you change your attitudes towards secular things without even knowing what's happening if the Holy Spirit isn't in control of your life on a daily basis. So by gradual acceptance of these secular standards, by the few people in our churches practicing sanctification, pursuit of holiness, pursuit of righteousness, secular standards have entered our midst and we've become comfortable with them because they've crept in unknowingly to us.

And then I guess I had to look at it. I said, why did this happen over the last two or three generations? And let me suggest to you, I guess, that as I studied this, I looked at the Bible and then I looked at the world around us. And I looked at some research that even in my own kind of a job where I'm involved in sales and marketing planning, looked at the research that a lot of our people do when they try to launch products and sell them to each one of you, because we have to be able to tap your needs.

And what I saw, I guess, is that I saw people in the world today that are possessed by fear. And I include even the church, because it's crept into the church, as I mentioned moments earlier, in a manner in which it was unknown to us. We're not sure how we got all of this fear in the church, but we become a phobic kind of a society.

We've got a fear of heights. We've got a fear of confining spaces. We've got fear of strangers.

We've got fear of public speaking. We've got fear of rejection by others. We've got fear of losing our material possessions.

We're a society that has become absolutely consumed by our fears. If you were to talk to psychiatrists and doctors today, you'll know what I mean. Maybe one or more of you are in that profession.

The people that are hurting in our midst today in our churches are absolutely confused and full of fears of our society. And yet God calls on us to have one fear that is proper. And I want to make sure that each of us understand this morning that there is a fear that is proper and right in His eyes.

And let's not lose sight of that fear. And if you have your Bibles, I turn to Proverbs 16, 6, where it simply says, and by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. If I'm aware of God, if I'm fearful of God, I will depart from evil.

And this is precisely what the fear of the Lord is. It's that moment by moment awareness that God is watching and weighing every one of my words, my thoughts, and my actions. Moment by moment fear that He's watching me.

Proverbs 15, 3 says, the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. And 1 Peter 2, 17 says, fear God. So this is a fear that is of the Spirit, a fear that each one of us as Christian brothers and sisters this morning should have in our hearts, a fear of God that is important for our outward defense, for our thought life.

And it's also important for us in terms of projecting to others an awareness of Christ's presence in us. Fears of the world, however, are not of God because God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of sound mind. And as I turned to scriptures to support that, I went to 2 Timothy 1, 7, which says, for God did not give us the spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

1 John 4, 18, sorry, 1 John 4, 18 and 19 says, our fears are a test of our love because there is not fear in love, but perfect love, perfect love of Christ, casts out fear for fear has to do with punishment. And I'll remember that statement because I want to come back to the relationship between punishment and guilt in our lives. So, but perfect love casts out fear for fear has to do with punishment.

And he who fears is not perfected in love. Remember that word sanctification? He who fears is not perfected in love and we love because he first loved us. I hope through this and these Bible passages that you can see what I'm looking at this morning is that these fears are fears that Satan uses to make us ineffectual as Christians.

And Satan has bound our evangelical church again, back to those statistics, the ones that are used. He's bound our church by fear and he's winning at this point in time, the enemy is in control. And he binds us as Christian leaders.

He makes us with his fear, with our fear, we lose the confidence to go and lead others. He binds us from undertaking a proper and consistent study of the Bible of his word. And he slows down or eliminates this process that we talk about, which is called sanctification.

He binds us from seeking God's truth for without God's truth, our lives, the life of our families, the work of our church, the witness to non-Christians. We're bound and gagged by fear. We're afraid to open our mouths and tell anybody about this great joy because we're fearful of everything.

And I guess we become what Paul referred to as a worldly or fleshly Christian when we do that, because we're only fed by milk and we're never capable of achieving a truly spirit-filled life that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians. And I guess as I speak to you this morning, even as I speak to you this morning, some of you and I have fears in our hearts. We fear any kind of a change in our status as individuals nowadays.

If we slip below the level at which we're at, we experience a level of a loss of confidence and self-esteem. If we rise above our level where we're at, all of a sudden we get discomforted with that rising above our level and fear steps in. And we're crashed into sort of a strange and

foreign waters and we're not sure of what to expect.

So we become fearful. We all too have comfort zones as the world calls it. We have an economic comfort zone.

We're not comfortable with people in different economic strata of society. We have an academic comfort zone. We're not comfortable with people who might have an academic background that might be different than our own.

We also have a social comfort zone. And last but not least, we have a spiritual comfort zone. We can handle change as individuals today because we're trying.

We read a lot about that. We hear a lot about that, that change is all around us. But we don't want to handle too much change.

Because of our fears of the unknown, we tend to be satisfied with the status quo. So if you don't move anything around me, I don't have any reason to fear anything. Yet I talked about a Christian life, which I believe is one full of passion and courage.

I can't believe that a person can step out and truly worship the Lord and truly witness to others if they're going to be satisfied with the status quo, because the Great Commission wasn't the status quo. Christ wouldn't have needed the original twelve if he wanted things to remain just as it is. And when I look at the original twelve, when he called them to go out and to preach to a world of about 120 million people, they must have thought he was crazy when twelve people were asked to go out and work, go out and witness to that world at that time.

But we're called to do the same things today. And yet I go back and I looked in the Old Testament, I went back to Genesis 12, the story of Abraham and the God speaking to Abraham. Genesis 12, verses 1 to 4, where the Lord said to Abram, get out of your country from your kindred and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.

I will make you a great nation. I will bless you. I will make your name great and you shall be a blessing.

And I will bless those that bless you. And I will curse him who curses you. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him and Lot went with him. And Abram was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. You know, God, God called Abraham to move.

He had to leave his town. He had to leave his nation. He had to leave his family.

He had to leave his roots. He had to leave his security. He had to leave all the familiar territory in his comfort zones that he had around him.

And what I find really unusual, he was 10 years past retirement. He was an old dog, as I wrote

down here, who was expected by God to learn new tricks, but he was ready for change. He did what God wanted him, what God called him to do.

And God's call to Abraham was a call to greatness. And if he hadn't done that, we wouldn't be here this morning. We wouldn't be worshipping together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Had Abraham not believed God and let his fears overcome him. And I contend this morning that he had a perfect love of God and therefore fear didn't get in his way. Abraham became a pilgrim.

He was a man on the move, but out of obedience to a divine call. And I guess I looked at other biblical figures and I looked at Moses. I looked at Joshua.

I looked at David. I looked at Paul and not least of all, I looked at Christ himself. They all did what God told them to do.

And that entailed a certain lack of security and resulting fears. And boy, we have nothing like that today in our own lives. Can you believe at 75 years of age this morning, if you were called to go and worship or go and plant a church in China, I can't conceive of those kinds of things.

And I'm only 45 years of age, but out of obedience, Abraham did what God called him to. And likewise, we as Christians were called to forgo that feeling of security in this world. We're asked to forgo that feeling because we've got the ultimate security.

If we believe God, we've got the ultimate security, which is the love of God. But the question is, do we believe him? He's told us that in this book repeatedly in his word that we have his love as his sons and daughters this morning, and we've got adequate compensation for that insecurity. But why then do we as Christians have so many fears in this world? Could it be that we believe in God? And this is a statement I've used so many times the last years in our Sunday school classes and Bible study.

We believe in God as Christians. There's no doubt about that. That's why we're here this morning.

But do we believe God or is it because we don't have the necessary knowledge because we have not endeavored to endure through the process of sanctification, the process of holiness enough to be able to believe God enough to be able to build our individual confidence to the level in which we fear not? Is that love not yet perfected in those in the missionary church, even those that might be here this morning? And I guess if I ask the question, is it possible for us to achieve a satisfactory level of sanctification when we demonstrate so much fear as an evangelical group? And then I looked at the New Testament and I asked you a question. Do you know what Christ's most frequent prohibition was in the New Testament? That's right. He said, don't be afraid.

Fear not. Do you think he knew something that we didn't know about ourselves? Well, I know

he did. And you know, he did.

But Christ knew something about us as individuals, which was this high level of fear that we have in our life. And the New Testament is filled with so many occasions where we as Christian brothers and sisters are called upon to go and encourage each other. We have to learn to build each other up because we're a fearful people, because we haven't been truly sanctified yet, because our pursuit of holiness is in question as a people, as an evangelical church.

We need to build each other up this morning. And I encourage you to think of that and keep that in your mind in the days ahead. As Christians, I believe we've gotten to the point where we don't even try anymore.

We all know what the world is like. We see the giants in front of us and we don't see the milk and honey, which the Lord outlined to us. And don't forget the absolute prerequisite for the courage that we need to have is fear, though.

But that's the healthy fear of the Lord that we talked about earlier. When I read from 1 John 4, that verse talked about fear has to do with punishment. We need to look at as Christians today why we should have fear in our lives.

How does this fear relate to punishment or relate to the guilt? Because there's a very close and subtle link between fear and guilt. And both have a fierce power to paralyze us, absolutely used of Satan to paralyze us from doing what we should be doing or what we're called to do. And they can make us halt, and they can make us retreat from our spiritual journey.

And as we look at the church around us today, Satan has been successful in achieving that. So both keep us from reaching out to God and what he's called us to, and both can distract us from this call of pleasing God. So since we can't always separate fear and guilt, and they're so closely linked, we look at the paralyzing fear as a direct result of unresolved guilt in our lives.

The ultimate fear that each of us have is the punishment at the hand of God's. We are frightened today by social rejection of each other. We're frightened about others' disapproval of ourselves.

We're frightened about peers being judging about what we are. We as a group of Christians judge each other, and we're fearful of that judgment. But the most fearful thing that we have to be fearful about is to fall in the hands of a living God.

Though many people don't acknowledge it, and I include non-Christians in this group as well, they are afraid that their lives have angered the creator of the universe. Consciousness of sin seems to be universal, and even in the non-Christian community. And I think that's something as Christians that we have to remember, that even in the non-Christian community, many people, 80% of our population says, I believe in God.

And they are fearful of sin and what might happen to them in the hands of a living God at some

point in time in this life or the next life. And sadly for us today, as I mentioned earlier, the doctors and the physicians and the psychiatrists, their offices are filled with people, even from within our church, who suffer from feelings of guilt. And yet, without a thorough knowledge of theology, these people can do absolutely nothing to help us.

They have no solutions to the inner problems that is facing society today. No solutions can come from the secular world. And no matter how we sin, whether that be by commission or omission, if we violate the law of God, we incur guilt.

That's a fact of life, and that's a fact of the way our hearts are. And this guilt that we have is real. And it can be devastating in our lives.

We know what guilt feelings can do. They make us feel very uncomfortable. And yet we employ devices to rid ourselves of these feelings.

We excuse ourselves. We rationalize it away. We shift the blame to other people in our circumstances.

We blame our society for all of our problems. We blame our environment for everything that's wrong. Oh, yes, and here's one.

Let's blame our parents for the way we are. We appeal to everything we can to escape the pain of personal responsibility. When I, and as I have been in the work world for many years in my business responsibility, my chosen vacation, I have found changes in 25 years of working.

Human beings today don't want to be accountable. They don't want to bear responsibility for their own decisions. They want to blame everybody else and everything else for everything that's wrong in their lives.

Oh, we even use psychological testing in our company. Yes, I'm a Christian, and I use psychological testing. And I'll tell you, the psychological testing has borne out Christianity and faith in God and love of Christ every time I do a test.

I can pick a Christian out by looking at the psychological results, but I'm talking about a Christian who truly is endeavoring to work at holiness because he has great peace and he has great love, and it shows up every single time on psychological tests. So no matter what kind of sins we have, we tend to blame someone else, but we need to recognize that these sins incur guilt on ourselves. And we can't keep using these secular tools to be getting to escape sin or guilt in our life.

It's too much to handle. And we need to look as Christians inwardly again at ourselves. And unless we cope with it in the right way, appealing to the saving work of Christ, as Paul talked about in this passage this morning, talked about the saving work of Christ, we are going to spend so much valuable time and energy going off in another direction that we're going to miss Vision 2000.

And yet the other risk that we have as Christians this morning is that we can learn how to harden our hearts. We can lose the capacity to blush, as it's said. And Jeremiah declared the word of God to Judah when he said, you have a harlot's forehead.

You refuse to be ashamed. They refuse to recognize their own sin. And here we see a refusal to repent linked with the squashing of guilt feelings.

The people of Judah protested their innocence while they continuously violated the law of God. And by repeated sin, they acquired the forehead of a harlot, and that is they forgot how to be ashamed. Is that something that the church today is suffering from? Is that something that we as Christians can no longer see in our lives, our own sins, our own responsibilities? Guilt only disappears, as we all know, when things are made right with God.

And that rightness we all know is also available at any time because we serve a forgiving God. But he doesn't force us and his children as his children into forgiveness. We have to do so willingly, or we will torment ourselves with guilt that even therapists can't explain away.

And I guess as I go back and I look at this evangelical vision that the EFC has and the evangelical churches have called Vision 2000, a program of specific scriptural strategies to encourage evangelism in our time, I look at God and the call for revival within the hearts of many in these churches. And the scripture verse that comes to all of our minds is 2 Chronicles 7, 14, where the Lord said to us, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will hear their land. God stated to us as Christians how revival will occur.

He once again gives us his promise, but he also gives us his conditions. He points out very clearly too that the problem is ours. We're not to look to the world and blame the world for our state of affairs.

We need to remember that today in this church, in the missionary church, that the world didn't cause us to become what we are. We caused ourselves to become what we are. And as Christians today in 1988, we must sit down with the Lord and examine individually our own life as we've been asked to do to humble ourselves before God.

And we must ask ourselves two basic questions. And I'd like to read these to you and ask you to think of these in the days ahead in your own life. At what point am I paralyzed in my spiritual growth? And the answer to that question is found in each individual heart this morning because we're at various stages of holiness or the development of holiness in our lives and the development of righteousness in our lives.

But at what stage are you paralyzed at? Think of that question. And then why am I paralyzed? Why have I not been able to go beyond this particular stage of paralysis in my spiritual life? So think about the answers to those two questions and ask the Lord for help in defining the

answers in your own life. And chances are that if we can answer these two questions accurately, we can identify those areas of fear and guilt that are in need of resolution in our individual lives.

And the grace of God, we all know as Christians, the grace of God is available to us. The grace of forgiveness is the most potent force. God doesn't want us paralyzed.

He doesn't want us to feel so insecure that we're not able to do anything. We don't need no real fear of the world and its obstacles. He wishes us to be conscious of our sins, but he takes no joy in seeing us immobilized by our guilt and our fears.

God is like any human parent this morning, eager to lead us out of a life of fear and guilt so that we are free to do what is right and pleasing. And that's borne out in Luke chapter one, verses 72 to 75, which follows up on Abraham's call. And it says, remember the oath, which he swore to our father, Abraham, to grant us that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, being delivered from this fear might serve him without fear in holiness, in righteousness before him all the days of our life.

And I think that scripture verse is so important to us as Christians in the missionary church this morning, because God again gives us a promise and he tells us his conditions. He wants us to be delivered from the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear. So we might not be bound as Satan would have us be bound, but he wants us to do it in holiness and righteousness.

And he calls us to be accountable. He calls us to be obedient. He calls us to believe him this morning.

And I guess I asked you the question, are you willing to serve him in righteousness by growing in righteousness? Are you willing to address your personal fears this morning? Your personal fears and guilt will determine whether you are prepared to reconvene the process of sanctification in our life. You know, we're a small group here this morning. We're not a lot of people in the missionary church.

And if I was to say to you, as I did, that 40 to 60,000 Canadians are involved in this process of sanctification of holiness, the pursuit of holiness. And that's what the pastors who feed us believe. That's their answer to the questions that were asked.

Then we as a smaller group, as we are this morning, if a number of us were to make that commitment to the Lord this morning and say, Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit in my life, I'm prepared to, through the work and the death of Jesus Christ, through the shed blood, work with you in the pursuit of holiness in my life. It's nothing to do with the person sitting next to you. It has to do with your personal relationship and your personal growth.

In 1 John 2, 3 to 5 says, we know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, I know him, but does not do what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him.

If we obey his word, his promises again, his love is truly made complete in us. Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. So we can see that through perfect love, perfect love is found in the knowledge of his word through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

And ladies and gentlemen, this morning, brothers and sisters, the word and the spirit go together. They cannot be divorced. Doctrine and life go together.

Doctrine in our church is important. I've heard the statement over and over again. We don't care about doctrine.

We do care about doctrine. It's the basis of the faith of which we believe. And we need to know what that doctrine is.

And we need to passionately believe that doctrine so that doctrine in our lives go together and can't be split apart. And the will we have and the mind that we have also go together. And to separate any one of those is to frustrate and grieve the work of the Holy Spirit.

To separate them is to avoid the integrated life that pleases our Lord and savior. So if we're going to be a church that's going to be concerned in the next decade about revival, as we read in Second Chronicles 7:14. And please don't read.

Don't forget that verse. Read it often in your prayer study, in your in your Bible study. We need first to concern ourselves with our own righteousness.

Where is my heart, God? Where is my heart with you? Are we in the will of God on an individual basis? And then we need to rid ourselves, throw out all those wrong fears that we have that we've picked up from society, whether we knowingly did it or whether we unknowingly did it. And I contend that by what I was talking about, we have unknowingly accepted all of these secular fields, but they're real. We need to rid ourselves of the wrong fears and have the right fear of God.

As we have learned this morning, we need to find or discover the perfect love that God has promised us through a process of sanctification. And I guess this is a word that even within the MMF that I hope that we can spend a lot of time talking about in the decade ahead. Sanctification.

I'm talking to the saved now. I'm not talking to the unrenewed. Because before we can reach into the world, we need to look at ourselves and our own problem or we'll never touch another soul.

The Lord will not bless our church unless we look at our own hearts first. God won't bless us with revival if our prayers are the prayers of worldly Christians. Coming back to the Bible reading that was read this morning, I wrote down here that the Holy Spirit we should observe leads us to the cross.

And I know you believe that this morning, but we know too that Paul found it a scary job to evangelize in such a sophisticated church as Corinth. But he stuck to one message and that was the message of Jesus Christ on the cross and he died for our sins. And that's what he preached.

The power of the Holy Spirit was clearly demonstrated as a result of that message in the church in Corinth. And his word, the Bible is not primarily to make exciting things happen, but it's to make us as people fall into submission to the gospel or obedience to God. We find it hard to accept and the world will find it hard to accept.

But you know, through all that research, the world is looking for someone to be obedient to. Non-Christians need that. Their hearts require that.

The Corinthian Christians though were immature because they hadn't understood all that the cross meant for them. So the Holy Spirit, Paul pointed out opens up the truth to us through the message of the cross. Again, we see that clever words and new methods are not the key to our evangelism of the future.

Oh, we're not going to evangelize this nation through. We've been, we've had more clever words and clever plans in the past. It's going to be going back to what Paul did, which is the truth of the cross.

God has a secret, which only his Holy Spirit can reveal to us. And only his people, if they're willing to be taught by God, can hear. Many churches give exciting evidence.

Many missionary churches that I've attended give me exciting evidence that you don't have to be clever. You don't have to be religious, religious. You don't even need religiosity.

You don't have to be a privileged social class to understand God's truth, but you need to be humble people, humbled by God's spirit. And he will open his secrets to us at that point in our life. And I guess as I talked this morning to many men that are here this morning, and we're talking about the future of the missionary men's fellowship in Canada, I guess my challenge to each of us this morning is can we, can you be a model in your life? Can you, and will you make a commitment in the days ahead and the years ahead? And if you're like Abraham and you're 75, I didn't put an age barrier on it and the Lord doesn't put an age barrier on it.

So whether you're 15 or 75, will you commit to being a model Christian as the Bible has asked us to be? Will you commit to grow in your holiness? It's an action word. You've heard about what the navigators called it. I believe the fellow who wrote the book, he called it pursuit of holiness.

It's not a one-time activity, brothers and sisters. It's a commitment for the rest of your life, but it's a decision that we particularly, I believe as men this morning have to make because men were called to be the spiritual leaders of our household. God has placed us there.

I believe that I hope you do. But if we're going to be the spiritual heads of these confused

households, which we manage, these households that have been inundated by the fears of the world, by the things that Satan has put in front of us, we need to make a decision ourselves first. And it's not that I'm not talking to the ladies here this morning, sisters, not at all.

But I believe that the men of the missionary church need to make that commitment this morning that, Lord, I give my life to you. I want to give my heart back to you again, and I'm willing to work at the process of holiness. I'm willing to work at the process of sanctification.

I'm willing to read your word. I'm willing to pray daily, and I'm willing to fast when called upon. And I'm asking you men in particular this morning, are you willing to accept this God-given responsibility? It is given from God.

I'm calling you this morning to obedience, encouraging you, if you will, to be the first part of the family, to be the first part of the church that makes that decision. Will we be the spiritual leaders in our families? Will we accept God's accountability? Will we dedicate ourselves to this process? Will we allow the Holy Spirit to reenter our lives and be real and powerful? I guess the questions that I ask at the end, what a freedom is offered to us. We've got freedom from guilt, freedom from fears, freedom to serve and to please an almighty God with everything that we are, passionately, with courage.

And that takes an enthusiastic, excited body of men within his church. No therapist in the world can offer us any relief, any relief from the fears of the world, but we all know that God can, that through the blood of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we can this morning. And I ask you and beg you to answer the question, will you let him have his way with you? Are you willing as Christian men this morning to trust him, to obey him, and last of all, to believe him?