

I. Introduction

- A. Some time ago, I went to Italy, I mean heaven, I mean Italy. Loved it. The people. The food. The history and art and architecture. The food. I'd go back in a heartbeat. Florence. Rome. Venice.
- B. And we went to Pisa, home the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa. It's the coolest thing in the world. They started building the tower in the year 1173. It's almost a thousand years old; it has a right to lean a little bit.
- C. There's a giant church, which is absolutely beautiful. Then a second building equally beautiful called the baptistery. Then the leading tower which is actually a bell tower, with seven bells, for do, re, me, fa, sol, la, ti.
- D. I was there with three friends, and we had a packed schedule. At that time, you could climb up to the top balcony of the tower. We talked about it, and decided against it because we had other places to visit. We told ourselves we'd come back later and climb the tower. So we went on with our trip.
- E. Right after we left, engineers removed the seven bells from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. They were reducing the weight at the top to help stabilize it.
- F. Right after that, they completely shut down the tower. You could look, but you couldn't enter. Tourists were no longer permitted to climb up the Leaning Tower of Pisa. No more views from the top. No more pictures from up there. No more climbing up 294 steps to the top.
- G. I was so disappointed. It's one of the biggest regrets of my life that I didn't climb up that tower when I had the chance.
- H. Sometimes, when you have an opportunity, it's like a door is open. But that door isn't open forever. Because there are times in your life when a door shuts, and it's too late.
 - 1. I'll come back to that, because there's more to the story.
- I. I know, not going up the Leaning Tower of Pisa is not that big a deal in the great scheme of things,. If that's my biggest regret, I'm probably not trying hard enough.

II. Parable

- A. Here's another story with much bigger, far more devastating consequence. Jesus tells this story.
 - 1. *And he gave an illustration: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. In fact, his barns were full to overflowing. So he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store everything. And I'll sit back and say to myself, My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!' "But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul will be required of you. Then who will get it all?" "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God." (Luke 12:16-21)*
- B. I'm hoping and I'm praying that today is your day, for the first time in your life, to step into "a rich relationship with God."
- C. Here's the title of my talk today:
 - 1. **It's Time to Get Right With God**
- D. This is part 6 of our series called Revival. I thought I finished the series last time, but surprise. I felt I needed to add one more message, so here we are.
- E. And I want to give you a heads up. I don't want to just teach and preach about getting right with God, I want to go a step farther.
- F. At the end of my talk, I want to offer you an opportunity to actually get right with God by being saved. I won't single you out. I'll be inviting you to say a silent prayer, and walking you through what it means to be right with God.
- G. You don't have to be ready. You just have to be willing. If God is tugging at your heart, don't resist him. He's opening a door for you. Step through it.
- H. So that's coming in a few minutes.
- I. So I'm going to mash together a few places in the Bible, because they all sound the same warning: it's time to get right with God.

III. Belshazzar

- A. You might have heard the phrase, "the handwriting is on the wall," but not know where it comes from.
- B. It comes from the somber story of a man who refused to get right with God.
- C. His name was Belshazzar. Six centuries before Christ, King Belshazzar ruled the Babylonian empire.
- D. But Belshazzar turned a blind eye to God's truth that was all around him.
- E. Belshazzar made some toxic choices that turned out to be fatal. For all his life, he heard about the true God. His own father had fought God for years, until he came to his senses. And then he got right with God. And he pleaded with Belshazzar, his son to get right with God.
 - 1. **It's time to get right with God because God has been calling you to himself all your life.**
 - a) It might have been a godly grandmother who prayed for you. A faithful father who showed you God. Maybe you grew up in the church, but have fallen away. Your conscience keeps nagging you to come home. That is the voice of God. Don't turn away.
 - b) It could be a friend, or a book, or media, or logic, or longing.
 - c) What is it? Who is it for you? What is it that brought you here today?
 - d) There is a God in heaven who loves you and draws you ceaselessly to himself.
 - e) For me, it was my sweet Auntie Jean who so faithfully brought me to Sunday school and taught me all about Jesus.
 - f) For Belshazzar, it was his father King Nebuchadnezzar, who urged him to get right with God.
 - 2. But Belshazzar refused and refused until he shut his own heart's door for the final time, and it was too late.
- F. Belshazzar throws an over the top party. A thousand VIPs with hundreds of prostitutes, wine, and drugs. He's partying, all the elites are partying, everybody is partying except a) God and b) the armies of his mortal enemy.
- G. The party is getting warmed up, when Belshazzar decides to mock his father's God. He orders his servants to go to the treasury. They must bring out the gold and silver cups that were stolen from God's temple in Jerusalem.

- H. The elites of his day spit in God's face. They not only get drunk from these sacred vessels, they use these vessels to make toasts to their false gods. They take what is sacred, and make it profane—just like they'd been doing all their lives.
 - 1. *They drank toasts from them to honor their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.* (Daniel 5:4)
- I. I asked an ER doc in town about rattlesnakes... how many rattlesnake bites they see in the ER. He said there weren't a lot. But ones they did see had a few things in common. Most of them involve a young man, a bunch of buddies, a long stick, and a fair amount of alcohol.
- J. Some people imagine they can keep poking God with a stick, and nothing will happen.
- K. Like Belshazzar, purposefully toasting the idols—which really are demons—of Babylon using vessels created for the glory of God. Poke. Poke. Poke. Bam.
 - 1. *At that very moment they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote, and his face turned pale with fear. Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him.* (Daniel 5:5, 6)
- L. The heavenly tagger is writing on the walls. All the nobles, all the elites of the empire see the words forming, letter by letter. The see a disembodied hand. They can read the words, but but do they mean?
 - 1. Four words: COUNTED. COUNTED. WEIGHED. DIVIDED.
- M. What? The nobles have no idea. They should have been preparing against war, but here they are numbing themselves to reality instead—today's elites are just the same, I'd say.
- N. You want to party? Go ahead and party. That's messed up enough.
 - 1. You want to poke God? You want to defy him again and again? What's wrong with you?
 - a) You need to get right with God.
- O. There's a streak of darkness running through the middle of every heart. It's a rebellion. It's a self-centeredness. It's a turning away from God.
 - 1. Some people deny it. Some people fight it. Some people give into it.
 - 2. Some people people hide it. Some people clean their rebellion up and make it look sophisticated. Some people don't care, and wear their rebellion proudly and openly.
 - 3. This is a rebellion of the creature against the Creator, and it is lethal.
- P. When I say it's time to get right with God, that presupposes that we're wrong with God. It presupposes everyone is infected. Nobody escapes.
 - 1. All have sinned.
 - 2. All have gone astray.
 - 3. All have gone their own way.
 - 4. All have turned away from God.
 - 5. All have judged him, disobeyed him, neglected him, sidelined him, minimized him, redefined him, edited him, or forgotten him.
 - 6. No wonder the Bible says,
 - a) *"There is none righteous, no not one"* (Romans 3:10).
 - (1) Not Belshazzar. Not his nobles. Not you. Not me.
 - (a) No one is right with God until they have yielded to God through Jesus.
 - (b) We are a race of rebels.
 - (c) And this is one of the central reasons why this fallen world is a morally broken pain machine.
 - 7. The consequence of all this is to be out of alignment with the justice of God.
 - 8. And the consequence of that is the only thing a God who is true and holy and righteous and fair and real and loving can do... the dreadful consequence is condemnation from the justice of God for time and eternity, which goes under the title the wrath of God.
 - a) Jesus actually talked about fleeing from the wrath of God (Matthew 3:7, Luke 3:7).
 - b) The way to flee from the wrath of God is to run into the open arms of the Son of God, crucified and risen again.
 - c) Jesus is saying it's time to get right with God.
 - (1) **It's time to get right with God, because we're in danger until we do.**
 - d) Which is exactly what I'm saying... and what I'm about to show you how to do.
 - e) And it is exactly what the handwriting on the wall was saying to King Belshazzar 2,700 years ago.
 - 9. So he's standing there, trembling, trying to decipher the handwriting from the disembodied hand on the wall.
 - 10. In comes the prophet Daniel. The same Daniel who led Belshazzar's father to the Lord.
 - a) *"You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself. For you have defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from his Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny! So God has sent this hand to write a message.* (Daniel 5:22-24)
 - 11. He explains the writing, "King, your soul has weighed in the scales, and you've coming up short. Your days are numbered. And you knew better. You own father taught you to get right with God. But you refused. Time's up."
 - a) **That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed. (Daniel 5:30)**
 - b) He went into the doom of a Christless, Saviorless eternity.
 - c) The enemies were at the gate, and Belshazzar partied. It was the end, not just for King Belshazzar, but for the whole empire of Babylon.

- d) And even when he saw the handwriting on the wall, he still didn't turn to God. He made an elaborate reward ceremony for Daniel, and that was it.
 - (1) His father's testimony, ignored.
 - (2) Daniel's exhortations, ignored.
 - (3) The handwriting on the wall, ignored. Think of that. A miraculous billboard straight from heaven, and when he's done trembling, he goes back to drinking.
- e) You fool! This very night your soul will be required of you.
- f) He should have humbled himself. He would have asked if there was any hope. He should have followed in his father's steps and put his faith in the God of heaven.
- g) But he died.
- h) Belshazzar died, and in that instant the door was shut. I pray it's not the same for you.
- 12. It's time to get right with God, because nobody knows how much time they have.**
- 13. You're going to be weighed in the scales of divine justice. You're going to be measured and counted and evaluated. Your days are numbered. My days are numbered. The clock is ticking. The handwriting is on the wall.
- 14. Who can measure up? Who can attain God's standards?
- 15. That's the question that plagued me and honestly frightened me.
- 16. Till God re-engineered my whole perspective. I was striving, sweating, straining, working to be morally acceptable to God. But it was futile. So God pointed me away from myself to his own Son, Jesus.
 - a) There was Jesus, nailed to an old rugged cross.
 - b) There was God, removing my sins and shortcomings from me, and transferring them all to Jesus.
 - c) There was the devil, not understanding what God was doing, but inciting the mobs to jeer and taunt or at least ignore the Savior of the world.
 - d) There was Jesus, willingly receiving our sins into himself.
 - e) There was the Supreme Court of Heaven, judging him, condemning him, punishing him, and pouring out wrath on Jesus for all my sins, instead of punishing me.
 - f) And there was Jesus, crying out the best words ever uttered in the history of the cosmos... IT IS FINISHED! (John 19:30).
- 17. I was so worried about coming up short. I was so worried about my works and my life being weighed in God's balances and not being enough.
- 18. But I was looking in the wrong place.
- 19. I was looking to myself. My eyes were focused in the wrong direction.
- 20. God's Word told me to LOOK AT JESUS and to trust him, and believe in him, and put my confidence in him. And I did... and in that moment, everything Jesus did to put me right with God became mine.
 - a) There came a day when I looked to Christ, and believed in him as my only hope.
 - b) And I've been looking ever since.
 - (1) I'm preaching and praying and hoping, and God is working and wooing, and drawing, so that today can be your day.
 - c) I'm a citizen of God's heavenly kingdom. God made me for heaven. That is my dwelling place now that I've been saved. This world is not my home. I'm a citizen of heaven. I belong there. In that place with perfect goodness, boundless love,, and unbridled joy.
 - d) I care about earth. I want some of heaven's qualities brought to earth, yes. We want to heal the pains of earth, but we're looking forward to that bright and cloudless new day where all our tears are wiped away.
- 21. If you're like most people, you're looking at this the wrong way.
- 22. Being put right with God is a gift. God paid for it. God did the work for it. God puts you right with himself when you receive Jesus.
 - a) It's a gift, not a performance.
 - b) An act of grace, not the outcome of works.
 - c) It's from God above, not from us below.
 - d) It's God's amazing grace, not our puny performance.
 - e) Faith, not works.
 - f) It's Christ, not me.
 - g) It's totally, perfectly, completely, beautifully, miraculously free.
- 23. Every time I talk about the way of salvation, I am met with objections. God's Word answers every objection.
 - a) You might object, That's too easy.
 - (1) I answer, it is easy for you, because Jesus did all the hard stuff.
 - b) You might object, It doesn't make sense.
 - (1) I answer, it doesn't make sense because you haven't thought through the death of Jesus on the Cross.
 - c) You might object, I'm sure there's something I have to add or perform or do. Some ritual. Some religion. Some good work. Some moral performance. Some way of sweetening the deal and tossing some coins into the purse of my salvation.
 - (1) I answer, then I'm sure you are devaluing the Crucified Savior and saying what he did on that Cross wasn't enough for you.
 - (a) Jesus paid the price.
 - (b) He paid in full.
 - (c) You get put right with God.
 - (d) It's totally free.

- (e) There is no other way.
- d) You might object, You're giving people permission to sin.
 - (1) I answer, I'm giving them permission to be saved so that they can possess for the first time ever the power not to sin.
- e) You might object, You don't know how bad I am. I've crossed a point of no return with God.
 - (1) I answer, if you're still breathing there's still hope.
- f) You might object, You don't know how good I am. I don't need a Savior.
 - (1) I answer, there is nothing left for the person who denies Christ... "but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:27)
- g) You might object, surely there's another way.
 - (1) I answer, if there were another way, why would God put his precious Son through the agony of the Cross?
- h) You might object, I'm not ready for this.
 - (1) I answer, you don't have to be ready. Only be willing. And if you're not willing, and you can hear of such a wonderful Savior and still harden your heart... then be it on your own head.
- 24. Would you lay aside your objections today that you might give due respect to the suffering Savior whose dying and rising is enough and more than enough to put you right with God?
- Q. It's time to get right with God because there's no reason not to but your own stubborn heart.**
 - 1. What will you do with Jesus Christ? Who is he to you?
 - 2. Why are you running from your rescuer?
 - 3. Why would you turn your back on the free gift of God?
 - 4. Why are you afraid of such self-sacrificing love?
 - 5. Why are you working so hard to accomplish a work that Jesus already declared finished?
- R. I started by talking about the Leaning Tower of Pisa. I had a chance to go up inside it, but I put it off. And right after that, they shut it down, some said for good.
- S. But there's hope.
- T. Because after ten years of study and repair, they reopened the Tower to the public.
 - 1. The door is open again. Just like it is for you today.
- U. It's time to get right with God because the gift is waiting, the door is open, and "behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).**
 - 1. Oh, won't you get right with God today?
 - 2. You can, and let's do that right now.