

## Message #13 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

### *“Stepping Over The Line”*

With Randy Smith

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk to you a little bit about a concept I call, stepping over the line. Let me read something to you that may help to get the idea of what I'm referring to. It goes like this:

It was one of those hot fall days. A bunch of kids were huddled together in a dusty school yard, watching two boys who faced each other. Buford Hays, the taller of the two, stood with his hands at the side of his waist, his head cocked sideways in a haughty, condescending manner, looking down his nose at Jim Bricker, who was a head shorter and twenty pounds lighter. Buford had just drawn a line in the dirt as a way of informing little Jim that there was trouble afoot, and that the challenge had been made.

Buford was well known by the other kids as the school bully. His larger size made it easy. But this was a new school year, and Buford was making sure everybody remembered that he was A#1 around there.

Jim Bricker looked down at the line and then back up at Buford. It wasn't the first time he'd been in this situation. The year before, Buford had drawn the line a couple of times, defying Jim to cross over it. Of course, all the kids knew what happened to anyone who crossed over the line. Buford had a reputation concerning those who had tried to stand up to him.

But then, that was last year. This was the beginning of a new year, and Jim had learned a few things since the previous school term. One thing he had learned was that there were certain things that were right, and certain things that were wrong, and he had developed a deep conviction for things that were right.

He stood before Buford, weighing the odds. And as he did, something down inside of him said, "Stepping over the line is not so difficult to live with. What's harder is not stepping over the line, and

then having to live with that.” With a determination that’s rare, even in grown men, young Jim Bricker squared his shoulders and stepped forward over the line.

There was a gasp from the crowd of kids, and they all looked at Buford’s face to see his reaction. But there was something unusual on his face this time. Maybe it was that he was taken by surprise, or maybe there was a hint of unsureness. But whatever it was, it was certainly clear that he had not expected Jim to step across the line.

Uncertainly, Buford took a step backward, and at the same time blurted out, “What do you think you’re doing, kid?”

Without hesitation, Jim replied in a clear strong voice, “I’m stepping over the line, Buford. That’s what I’m doing. And if you don’t like it, then put ‘em up. I’m not taking any more of your nonsense.”

Once again there was hesitation on Buford’s part, and he took another step back. Jim quickly took a step toward him, and Buford backed up again. All of a sudden the other kids caught on to what was happening, and they all began to yell taunting words at Buford who was clearly acting cowardly instead of as the school bully.

Now, I’m going to leave the story here, for we can all imagine how the situation might have ended, one way or another, but what we do know is that Buford had more reputation going for him than aptitude. Little Jim Bricker had brought that knowledge to light, just because he had been willing to step over the line.

We all know that stepping over the line, whatever that line is in our current situation, can be kind of scary. We don’t know what we might face. It might be victory, or it might be failure. And there can be a lot of pain associated with failure. But then, just like little Jim realized, there can also be a lot of pain associated with not stepping over the line.

As Christians, we sometimes think that we stepped over the line when we gave our hearts to Jesus. But many times we are faced again with the challenge of stepping over the line in situations where Satan confronts us. That devil, just like Buford Hays, has a reputation for beating up on anyone who goes against him, and many times Christians back off, more afraid of Earth’s bully than being committed to that which is right.

And just what are we afraid of? When Little Jim Bricker stepped across the line, he knew that he could be hurt very badly, and what would hurt him was Buford’s fists. But when Christians fight against the devil, it isn’t fists that make us fearful, but fiery darts, as referred to in Ephesians 6:16. If we were actually in danger of physical fiery darts, we would soon learn how to avoid them. But in the spiritual warfare that we fight, we don’t fight against flesh and blood, but as 2 Corinthians 10:4 tells us, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty, even to the pulling down of strongholds.”

Not only do we not use the weapons of man against the evil, but the real danger to us is not from physical weapons either. The attacks against us are not with guns, knives, or spears. Satan’s purpose isn’t so much to destroy our physical bodies, but rather to destroy our spiritual relationship with Jesus. In short, he wants to destroy our faith in God, and he wants to destroy our soul. His weapons are those which hit at our faith, and attempt to destroy our testimony of Jesus Christ. You see, we Christians are no longer children of the flesh, but are now born again spirit beings, therefore, in order for Satan to be successful, he must destroy the spirit life within us. And, quite frankly, if he can destroy our testimony, he has, essentially, destroyed us.

Because of the way he attacks us, it’s easy to get into situations where we are tempted to withhold our testimony of Jesus because someone might laugh at us or be upset at us for bringing up the subject of God, or religion. Do you ever find yourself in a situation where you keep your mouth shut because of

fear of rejection? Do you ever fall short of being the witness you should be? Well, maybe it doesn't happen to you, but I must admit that it happens to me. Someone says something, and a door opens which will allow me to give some kind of witness to Jesus Christ, and then I hold back because of fear. I try not to hold back, but sometimes I walk away from a situation and think, "Well, well. I really missed the boat that time. I had the perfect opportunity and blew it."

But you know, it isn't the incidental occurrences that will make the big difference when you stand before God at the great judgment day. It will be your overall testimony of Jesus Christ that will judge you, and if you are found to have been more fearful of people than of God himself, God will judge you as unworthy to be his bride for eternity. No, this doesn't mean you have to jump in everyone's face that comes along and be so pushy that you drive everyone away. That's not what I'm talking about. As Christians, we must choose our battles. And we have to know when it is better to fight, and when it is better to use a little discretion and back off. But when you always seem to use that, QUOTE, 'little bit of discretion', UNQUOTE, and you always back off, that isn't wisdom that is driving you, but fear of what everyone will think.

Rejection is a very difficult thing to face, and it is one of Satan's most powerful weapons. No one likes to be rejected, and therefore we all try very hard to fit in wherever we go. This has some good points to it, but not when all we ever do is try to keep from offending people. If we never offend anyone, then we also will never know what it's like to step over the line.

The church of today is supposed to be a testimony to the world concerning the word of God. When Jesus was on this earth, he was the Word of God made flesh. He was God in body, showing God, in physical form, to a world of physical people. He was the physical portrayal of God in a form that humans could see and understand. By speaking the word of God, and then by demonstrating that word, he showed the world who God was. When Jesus ascended into heaven, we who are followers of him became the body of Christ. When we are beheaded, as referred to in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:3 and Revelation 20:4, and allow our heads to be replaced by the head of Jesus Christ, then we reveal God to the world by speaking and living the word of God. This is how God revealed himself to the world in the days of Jesus, and still reveals himself in this current day also.

Jesus said, in Matthew 5:14, that we are the light of the world. The light of the world is not us in ourselves, but the light of the world is the word of God that shines through us. And it only shines through us when we present an image of God instead of an image of our own fleshly person. If people cannot see God in us, then how will they come to know him? And if we are trying to fit in to the world system to such an extent that no one will be offended by our lives, then we aren't truly following in the footsteps of Jesus, for he offended many. Jesus was not afraid to stand up and be the true image of God, no matter what people thought. The word of God not only issued from his lips, it presented itself clearly by his life.

The devil doesn't want God to be known in the earth. He wants the word of God to be hidden. He wants Christians to camouflage themselves to the point that instead of being recognized as the light of the world, they are recognized as just some nice people of the world. Satan works hard to convince God's people to concentrate on being like all the other people of the world so that God will not be seen and known. And we, the church of today, fit into the mold of Satan's social system so well that our testimony is almost completely destroyed. Oh, sure, Christians all around the world speak the word of God as preachers and missionaries, but what about our daily testimony that is SHOWN. What the world sees

mostly is a church that speaks the word of God, but doesn't look any different than just socially moral people who don't do this and don't do that. The church isn't really peculiar anymore, and it isn't separate from the world. For the most part, the church fits right in. Christians, for the most part, are just nice people with good social values, and morals that are formed by situational ethics rather than morals formed explicitly by the word of God.

It is time for the people of God to take a stand against Satan's bullying tactics. It's time that we stop worrying about taking a beating. It's time that we step over the line, and declare that Satan will not control our testimony anymore. No, not the testimony of our lips, because the testimony that Christians give with their mouths is fairly good. However, the testimony of Christians that is severely lacking is that testimony we give by our actions, by the way we live our lives in the sight of other people.

God intended his people to be a separate people. A people who were peculiar, who were different from all others. But you know, the beast nature of man is a very strong force, and must be placated. At least, that's what Christians have come to believe. But try telling John the Baptist that he missed the boat. Try telling Peter and Paul and Stephen and Silas and Timothy that it is important to live a comfortable life, and that God wants us to have nice things. Try telling the martyrs of Christianity that they shouldn't go around with long faces because God wants his people to have a little fun sometimes. Can't you just see the apostle Paul running around in a pair of Nike's and an Old Navy shirt, and driving a BMW because it makes him look cool? Can't you just see the disciples at the last supper with a big screen TV at one end of the table because it happens to be Super Bowl Sunday?

When are Christians going to wake up and realize that Satan has caused the people of Earth to create a social system where the only things that can be bought and sold are the things of this world, and that the things of God, the true word, the bread of heaven, is at famine conditions? Everything is offered by the merchants of the earth that will stimulate the beast nature of man, but that which will stimulate the spirit man is being rationed out. There is a current famine for the true word of God, which Amos 8:11 refers to.

The merchants of the earth are rapidly pushing the business of Christianity out of the market. There is so little understanding of the things of God. The ways of the world are known even by our children, but our children do not know the ways of God. They have followed the ways of their Christian parents, and have traded the Pearl of Great Price for the latest video game player. They don't talk of God, they talk of secular music, TV programs, and movies. Everything to them is cool. Everything to them is the pride of life, for their Christian parents taught them that this was the most important thing. No, they didn't teach them this with their lips, but with their lives.

Are you more concerned about living this life for yourself than you are in serving Jesus Christ in order that his will might be established on Earth? Are you afraid of what Satan can do to you in the presence of others? Are you afraid that they will reject you, that they will make snide comments about you? Are you more interested in saving face than in presenting your face to be smitten? Is the spiritual warfare a distant battle, or have you heard the cry of our Commander in Chief to go forward?

It's not time to back down from Earth's bully. It's time to, 'Step Across The Line.' The pain we might suffer from making a bold commitment and standing up for what is right, cannot be compared to the pain of reproach we will suffer when we stand one day before God, and it is revealed that we refused to step over the line. In these last days, God is calling his people to come out of the world and be separate. No,

not a refusal of being around sinners, but to be so different that the unsaved of this world will not have any difficulty seeing Christ in us.

Romans 1:16, says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God onto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

And Matthew 5:10-16 says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for in this same way they persecuted the prophets which were before you. 13 You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? Then it is good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the feet of men. 14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand; and it gives light to all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Certainly these words should burn in our hearts, and should move us to urgent action for the cause of Christ. As we get closer to the last day, the world gets more and more wicked. Our government no longer fears God. Our schools no longer teach God. Our coworkers no longer refrain from publicly blaspheming God's name. Across the face of the whole world, television and movie screens present lewdness and suggestive language, and there is little complaint made, even from Christians. In the past, Christians have tried to complain, but the progression toward wickedness is only temporarily restrained. As a result, Christians have begun to turn away from strong morals and instead, they have begun to accept a generalized worldly lifestyle which will be more in keeping with the world's concept of society. In short, Christians are caving in to the lifestyle of the world and care less and less for holiness.

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Matthew 24:22, refers to a shortening of God's established timetable in order to protect his elect, his chosen people. This verse tells us that if the work of Satan were not brought to an early end, no salvation of anyone else would be possible because of the tremendous mountain of lies which destroys faith in God. And also, this verse specifically says something very interesting. And please notice especially that this shortening of the time is for the sake of the elect.

Think of this. If Christians have it altogether, and are not about to be drowned in the sea of Satan's lies, then why would God have to shorten the time for our sake? Think about it. God isn't talking about saving our physical lives, but in saving our souls. And the deception all around us is unbelievably strong. If the time were not shortened, then even his elect in these last days would lose faith, and eventually be lost. God doesn't have to shorten the time to save those who are in no danger. Therefore, if you think Christians are not in any danger, think again.

Yes, God will save us, but from this verse, we can see that we are not completely pleasing to God, for we are in the midst of spiritual Babylon. That's why in Jeremiah 51, and Revelation 18, the Bible warns God's people to flee from that wicked city, to come out of Babylon. Now, physical Babylon does not exist as a populated city in our current world, but spiritual Babylon does exist. Babylon the Great is a symbolic term describing those people who are in bed with the world. They are more concerned with all the things that can stimulate their fleshly lifestyle, then with things which accomplish the work of God in the Earth. Of course, this doesn't mean that YOU are one of these people, but then, if you are part of the

TV and movie scene, and your future plans of prosperity center around you, and what you can get more of, and how you can get it, then this probably DOES refer to you. At any extent, Christians are dying like flies. They might still be walking around on their feet, but many are dead on their feet. They aren't really Christians anymore, but just trying to look like Christians. What the church of today is experiencing is the "Falling Away," referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. This falling away is a falling away from the truth of God. It is a defection from the principles of Christianity, and an acceptance of the world's moral standard instead of God's standard, and it is happening now.

The church is in imminent peril. We are so immersed in Satan's end time system that we are deceived and don't know it, and are in danger of drowning in the Devil's decadent lifestyle. We have little time to do the work of the Lord, but plenty of time to waste on frivolous things. Instead of having the mind of Christ, we have the mind of an animal, the mind of the beast. We have been putting on the nature of the beast, the flesh nature, and have forgotten what a spirit man should be.

So, how is God going to get our attention? Maybe God is trying to warn his people and no one is listening. After all, he says he is coming back for a church without spot or wrinkle. If so, than he isn't just waiting around for the rapture like so many Christians are. Instead, he's trying to tell his people to get their robes washed before it's too late. We can't be immersed in the world and still have garments that are unspotted from the flesh. We are supposed to be Christians who are robed in purity, which means that we should be wearing robes that are white and bright, not spattered and spotted with the muck and mire of this world.

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In closing, let me refer again to the schoolyard illustration. When little Jim Bricker stepped across the line and confronted Buford Hays, the school bully, it wasn't just little Jim that benefitted, but it also benefitted all the other kids that had been bullied around by Buford. If you're not willing to step across the line for your own sake, at least think about doing it for the sake of all the others around you who are too afraid to do it themselves. Somebody has to do it. So, why not you? Don't you think Earth's bully has pushed God's people around long enough? Besides, after you step over the line, you'll like yourself a whole lot better. You may not be liked by everyone around you, but at least they won't have any trouble seeing what God is really like. All they'll have to do is . . . watch you.