

The Seven C's to Salvation

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This is going to be an interesting sermon for me to give. I'm probably going to have a little more fun than I ordinarily do in a sermon. What happened was I had an idea for a sermon and I carried that idea with me and developed it for about six to eight weeks—pages of notes and all that. Then two days ago, I changed subjects. I got enthroned with an idea. So, the sermon I'm going to give to today, I'm going to have some fun with it and I hope you do too. It's going to be slightly weird and may cause a few groans—as in a really bad joke where you roll your eyes but secretly amused. But you're not going to let anyone else know. The title of the sermon is:

The Seven C's to Salvation

These are not the seven seas of Sinbad the sailor, this is actually the letter C. What happened, as I laid it out, I saw that a few of the major points started with the letter C. Then I started a game to see how many words I could come up with that started with the letter C and which I could pack into the sermon. So, you'll see why I did this. It's kind of fun and amusing. I'm not a musician but we know in music there are chords and there is a C chord. There's a C major and there's a C minor. It would seem to me—not being a musician—that a C major is going to be way more important than a C minor. Therefore, my major points are C major points and my minor points that support them are C minor points.

The Seven C's to salvation are:

Calling, Commitment, Courage, Connection, Capabilities, Confidence, Conversion.

Isn't that a lot of C's? But we are only getting started. This is going to be a sermon about the fundamentals. I was reminded this last week by a person who was telling me that they were up on a mountain taking an advance ski lesson. Their ski teacher saw a person who was going down the slope but they were going down with what's called the snowplow. It's the beginning thing that you learn on how to get down a mountain alive. This was a very basic thing and the instructor said the person was the ski champion of Venezuela. He asked, "Why are they doing a snowplow"? He said they are just getting back to the fundamentals to get the feel of them again so as not to get lost.

Vince Lombardi is famous for starting every season of football by holding up a football and saying,

"Gentleman, this is a football".

Just because something is about the "fundamentals" does not mean it's not important. When you look at people who get lost on the journey, it's ordinarily a challenge with the fundamentals. They stop doing the fundamentals. So, it's super important, even though it's simple and I'm not going to tell you anything that you

haven't heard 100 times before. That doesn't take away from the importance and the impact and necessity of what we're talking about.

The First Major C – Our Calling

So, we are going to start by talking about our *calling*. We get a calling—it's "ring, ring, ring". Let's go to John 6:43 and I know you know this. Every scripture I'm going to bring up is a very basic one we have heard over and over.

John 6:43 *Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves.*

44) No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (NKJV)

So, we get a *calling*, but then there has to be a response. For a more familiar scripture, go to Matthew 22. We're going to start in verse 1.

Matthew 22:1 *And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:*

2) The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,

3) and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

4) Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'"

5) But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.

6) And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

7) But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8) Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

9) Therefore, go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'

10) So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11) But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. (NKJV)

We know our garments that we put on are associated with righteousness.

12) So, he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.

13) Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

14) For many are called, but few are chosen." (NKJV)

Being called may have gotten us invited to the party, but we have to answer the call. We have to prepare. In our calling—think about when you were called, way back in time. The first thing that happened was you became curious. That's another C word. Inquiring minds wanted to know. We began to have questions. We questioned our existing beliefs; we questioned things we had heard, perhaps all our lives and we began to collect information. That's another C. We captured bits of truth. Then we consumed content. I can't help but grin—you may think this guy is awfully clever to capture and create such captivating dialogue. But if you remember, when we were called, we really did start consuming a lot of content. We had the Plain Truth, we had the Good News—or I did—letters, booklets and don't forget the Bible Correspondence Course that you had to keep doing because you knew you would be tested on it to be able to keep it coming. We barely had time to open the Bible because there was so much content coming.

The Second Major C – Commitment

We learned about covenants and God's plan for salvation. We counseled—another C fits in there. We asked questions and had deep discussions. We examined ourselves and then the next step—the next major C in the process—is *commitment*. It came to a time where we had gone about as far as we could go without making a commitment. So now we are counseling for baptism, to make the commitment. There's an old saying—talking about breakfast.

“The chicken was involved but the pig was committed.”

I'm not saying you guys eat pork or I eat pork. It just didn't sound right to say

“The chicken was involved but the turkey was committed.”

Commitment—here we are coming close to the first of the year and what happens for most people is they start making New Year's resolutions. Gym memberships—pre-Covid—would go up, diet products would fly off the shelf, people were setting goals. If you get through January and February and look at March, look at who is still going to the gym. It's gone down. How did the diet go? It didn't go so well. The goals get forgotten in the business of life. However, this is a commitment that we can't take casually. We have to really understand this one. In Luke 14 we were asked by our counselor to carefully count the cost. (Did you like that one? Four C's right in a row).

Luke 14:27 *And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*

28) *For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—*

29) *lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,*

30) *saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish?'*

31) *Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?*

32) *Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.*

33) *So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.* (NKJV)

So, we have to count the cost and the count is all of it. It costs everything. Our counselor consulted with us to make sure we clearly understood and that we were clear on what we were getting into. Back in Luke 9, it's a long chapter—go to verse 57.

Luke 9:57 *Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go."*

58) *And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

59) *Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."*

60) *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."*

61) *And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."*

62) *But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (NKJV)*

Once we start this journey, there is no turning back. There are no "take backs". I remember when I was a kid, with my siblings, we might make a promise and then we would say that promise didn't count because we had our fingers crossed. You forgot to check to see if my fingers were crossed. That doesn't apply. Once we commit, we have agreed to something. Look at 2 Peter 2:18.

2 Peter 2:18 *For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.*

19) *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*

20) *For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.*

21) *For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.*

22) *But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (NKJV)*

That's why our counselors wanted to make sure that we clearly understood completely what we were committing to. It's a big commitment with no crossed fingers and no "take backs".

Mark 16:14. We had made this decision and we were counting the cost and the requirement was that we had to believe.

Mark 16:14 *Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.*

15) And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

16) He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. (NKJV)

So, once you know the truth, you can't un-know it. If you believe you'll be saved and if you don't believe, you'll be condemned. So, what real choice did we have? Let's look at verse 17.

17) And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

18) they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

(NKJV)

If you go back and dissect that verse, who is the "they". It's those who believed and are baptized. These are the signs that follow them. We have to make a commitment—a big commitment that we can't take back.

The Third Major C - Courage

We were *called*, we made a *commitment* and now we have to keep that commitment and it requires *courage* to continue the fight. I have a scene I want you to picture. Satan has a trophy room and in his trophy room are trophies. You know how the hunter would have a deer head and moose head? The picture in Satan's trophy room up on the wall, is your head. You're his trophy, you're his prey. That's what he wants. That's the enemy. We have a creepy, crafty and cunning adversary who wants to crush us, so that we crash and burn. See all those C's there?

There's one time I was out in my front yard, many years ago when my son was a teenager. We were out in the front yard playing frisbee and up above our house, maybe 100 yards, what came over was a military jet. At the end of our block was a field and this thing went five or six houses and then maybe another 100 yards and hit the ground. Boom! It was big. We all, being curious and young, we ran over there to see what we found. What we found was amazing. We found a big hole. There was no jet. Where did the jet go? It hit the ground and created such an explosion, it put all the dirt up in the air and the dirt came back down and completely buried the jet. So all we saw was the hole. Whenever I hear the term, crash and burn, I picture that jet on fire, destroyed, buried, out of sight, invisible, no trace left. Well, that's what our adversary wants. So, we have to realize that he crafts creatively and customized trials to confound and confuse us. (Did you like all those C's?)

The other thing is that he is camouflaged. When a hunter is camouflaged, he wears colors by which he can see the prey, but the prey can't see him. Satan can see us but we can't see Satan. I think the game would be different if we could see him and what he's doing and his influences and he wasn't invisible. But he's completely camouflaged. He controls us by pulling our strings and pushing our buttons, just like

a puppet. That's what he does. He knows how to get to us. So, we have to work hard to combat this. I got another C word in there. Combatting requires courage. There's a stoic saying that I like:

He who bleeds the most in training, bleeds the least in battle.

Our survival in dealing with our adversary, is based on recognizing that the game that he is playing and recognizing that some of the stuff that we see and that comes into our minds, is from outside forces that we are fighting. Let's go to Ephesians 6:10. You probably knew this is where I was going because this is so fundamental.

Ephesians 6:10 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

11) *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

12) *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

13) *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

14) *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

15) *and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

16) *above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

17) *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

18) *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. (NKJV)*

If we do not put on the armor of God, if we are not aware of our camouflaged, invisible adversary, we don't have a chance. We have to put on that armor. He produces a carnival of carnage. He's is the czar of calamity, corruption and convoluted reasoning. He wants us to be captured, held captive and end up as a trophy. Deuteronomy 30 is just a reminder. Our adversary wants to make things complicated and convoluted. But we have to realize it's not, it's simple.

Deuteronomy 30:11 *For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.*

12) *It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'*

13) *Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'*

14) *But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.*

15) *"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil ... (NKJV)*

If we resist the devil, he will flee from us. But we have to resist him. Let's go to 2 Timothy 1:6.

2 Timothy 1:6 *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

7) *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.* (NKJV)

We have to stir up that gift. We have to put on that armor and realize that we are in combat and with whom we are combatting.

The Forth Major C - Connection

We have to have a close relationship with God. What does a close relationship look like? It's not difficult. If you think about when you had a new romantic relationship. What did that look like? You showed by your actions and words, that you cared. You were concerned. Communication was off the charts—obsessed with communication and sharing ideas. You were very careful in your behavior. You didn't want to offend the one you were interested in. We were careful in our choices. If we made a mistake, we were so quick to correct the mistake and apologize so that we didn't damage that relationship.

A relationship with Yehovah really has those same elements in it. Turn to James 4:7.

James 4:7 *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

8) *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

9) *Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.*

10) *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.* (NKJV)

If we make the effort to get close to God, God will make the effort to get close to us. So, what does a close relationship with God look like? It means your thoughts, your words and your actions show that you care, that you are concerned about His thoughts, His way, what He thinks. You are concerned. You are praying a lot, just like a new relationship. You're reading His Word because you want to know His thoughts and then you want to apply those to please Him. It's what you would do in a human relationship. The application of what we read in God's Word shows God that we are listening.

Have you ever talked to somebody and they are kind of looking at you, but they are kind of zoned out and are not hearing what you're saying? God can tell whether we are just speaking by rote or really involved in the application; if we are really listening to what He has to say to us. So, we are careful in our behavior. We're careful in our choices because we don't want to offend. We correct mistakes quickly. I make a lot of mistakes, but we correct those mistakes because we can feel that the relationship is damaged and we want to fix that. We want to be close. Our success in salvation and all these steps has to do with how close we are with Yehovah; our relationship with God. We have to correct mistakes and repent. Our actions, our thoughts and our words have to support what we say—God sees our heart, we can't hide. It has to be real and, it has to be authentic. Look at John 17:3.

John 17:3 *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (NKJV)*

I have a number of children who are not involved in the church, in practising the truth and my prayer to God, for my children is, that they can know Him. If they can just know Yehovah, if they can know God, then they would dig in and they would create a better and more enduring eternity for themselves. If they don't know God, they're lost. I see some of the choices they make. I have good kids, they do great in school, they have good jobs. They don't have any horrible outcomes which means they aren't really looking for solutions because everything is going pretty well. But my prayer is that they would know God. Knowing God is eternal life and not knowing God is eternal death and that's not what I want for my kids. Let's look at Philippians 3:7 Paul is talking.

Philippians 3:7 *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.*

8) Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

9) and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

10) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

11) if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (NKJV)

Nothing is more important than our relationship with God. That's where our strength comes from, that's where our sanity comes from, where our wisdom comes from, where everything comes from—from our relationship with God. We have to invest in that just like we would invest in any relationship that we want to develop. What happens with a lot of physical relationships is that they become boring, mundane and then the effort that was invested into developing that relationship goes away and it deteriorates. That can happen with our relationship with our Father. We have to put that way at the top and we have to work on building that relationship.

The Fifth Major C - Capabilities

The fifth major C is *capabilities*. We are expected to grow. To grow our capabilities. There's a Japanese word that is *kaizen*. Unfortunately, it does not begin with the letter C, but it stands for "continuous improvement". I was taught that Proverbs is about wisdom, and as described there, it is talking about skillful living. When we are first introduced to the truth and we begin to go through this process, our skill level in living, our spiritual wisdom, is not high. We have to work on that, we have to expand our capabilities. Ephesians 2:10.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (NKJV)*

We're supposed to walk skillfully. We have to expand our capacity so that the challenges that we dealt with as a babe, we now have greater capacity to deal with—from milk to meat. Look at 1 Peter 2, a couple of scriptures where Paul was expressing this thought of “growing” to different groups.

1 Peter 2:1 *Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,
2) as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,
3) if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (NKJV)*

We have to yearn for that spiritual nutrition.

1 Corinthians 3:1 *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.
2) I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;
3) for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? (NKJV)*

Paul is saying, “Grow up.” Look at Hebrews 5:12.

Hebrews 5:12 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
13) For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.
14) But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (NKJV)*

“By reason of use”, which is application. Let's look at a parable in Luke 8:11 where Christ is explaining the parable.

Luke 8:11 *“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.
12) Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.
13) But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.
14) Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.
15) But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. (NKJV)*

We are supposed to grow and bear fruit and apply ourselves and get results. 2 Timothy 3. I know these are a whole string of very, very familiar scriptures but they are all so important because they lay out the path to salvation so clearly.

2 Timothy 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17) that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (NKJV)

That tells us the power of scripture is to complete us and to equip us and prepare us. But if we're not consuming God's Word then we are not going to be prepared, we are not going to be complete. When trouble comes, we just may not be ready. Hebrews 4:12.

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* (NKJV)

You see how this is about learning and growing and developing. Colossians 1:10.

Colossians 1:10 *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;* (NKJV)

A basic precept; growing, increasing, *kaizen*—getting better and better. Growing our competencies. 2 Peter 3:17.

2 Peter 3:17 *You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18) but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.* (NKJV)

These are powerful, powerful scriptures. You read the scripture and I just want to walk away and scratch my chin and think about it. Think about what He's telling us. Last scripture on this subject is Hebrews 6:1.

Hebrews 6:1 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2) of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3) And this we will do if God permits.* (NKJV)

When we start out our capabilities are low, our skill is low. We make a lot of mistakes. Even later on in life we still make a lot of mistakes, but if you think about the trials that Job went through, have we ever had to go through a trial like Job went through? Where you literally lost all your kids, all your possessions, your health—you lost everything. Some of us actually may have experienced something like that. But to be able to survive and thrive on the other side of that, you have to have your focus on the fundamentals and have gained capabilities and wisdom that you did not start out with. Those are high level trials that are fit for somebody who can handle them.

As a babe, we don't get hit with that kind of stuff. You look at Abraham's trials early in life. "Get up and go"—he got up and went. But then later on he is asked "to kill your son—sacrifice your son". That's a biggie. That's not where God started with Abraham. Instead of saying, "Get up and go", he could have said "Kill somebody." Abraham had to grow, Abraham made a lot of mistakes and those mistakes are recorded for us. He had to grow to the point where he was asked to do something and he was willing to do it even though he was stopped, so that God said, "Now I know." That's what we're dealing with. We have to grow and develop skill and wisdom because we are going to be faced with "stuff" where we have choices and we have to make decisions where God will say, "Now I know." He has to know. It wasn't just God Who knew, now Abraham knew; he knew that there was nothing that could be thrown at him that he would not make the right choice on because he was willing to give up everything. There was nothing more important than obeying Yehovah. So, God knew and Abraham knew but it took that trial to get him there.

The Sixth Major C - Confidence

The sixth C is *confidence*. What is confidence? Confidence is certainty. There was a story I heard or read—I don't remember—but there were three mountain climbers who were going to attempt to climb the north wall of the Matterhorn which at the time had never been climbed before. There was a reporter out there interviewing them.

The first one was asked, "Are you going to climb the north wall of the Matterhorn?" He replied, "I'm going to give it everything I've got—I'm going to put my all into it."

He asked the second climber "Are you going to climb the north wall of the Matterhorn?"

He said, "I'm going to do my very, very best."

He asked the third climber, "Are you going to climb the north wall of the Matterhorn?"

He said, "I will."

All three of those did what they said. One guy did his best, one guy gave it everything he had, but only one guy climbed the north wall of the Matterhorn. He was the one who was committed. He was confident. He looked at that and owned it. He was certain he was going to do it.

I'm not a big football watcher, but I have watched enough football and I enjoy watching football with people who are football watchers. There is a time in a game—sometimes multiple times—where you see momentum shift. This team was dominating and they were doing really well and then it shifts. The confidence that this team had, all of a sudden, something happened and they got less confident and the other team got more confident and with that confidence they just started knocking it out of the park. Everything went well and they started catching everything and they gained ability because of their confidence.

If you look at guys who are going into a fight, like a boxing match or something like that, they have a stance of calm confidence. They are fearless, because if they show

any weakness, if they look down at the ground or show any weakness, their opponent will exploit that. It will make their opponent twice as confident. We are to be confident. Let's look at Hebrews 4:16.

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NKJV)*

What does it mean to come boldly? It means to come with confidence. You're not doubting, you're coming boldly to the throne of grace. Look at James.

James 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4) But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7) For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (NKJV)*

Confidence is good. Doubting is bad. Let's look at Matthew 14. This is where Christ was walking on the water and Peter was doubting.

Matthew 14:22 *Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23) And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. 24) But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. (NKJV)*

This story in Luke, adds that they weren't making progress rowing against the wind because it was so difficult.

25) Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26) And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27) But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 28) And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29) So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30) But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31) And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (NKJV)

We can relate to Peter because nobody walks on water, right? But, on the other hand, he knew Who he was dealing with. He knew this was Jesus, the Son of God Who created everything, He created the water. He saw Him breaking the rules of physics by walking on the water—this is God. And yet, it's interesting, he had enough faith to get out of the boat for sure, but then he didn't have enough faith to stay on top of the water. So, the question is, why do we doubt, when we know that God has our back? When we know that Christ died for us. When we know the magnitude of the sacrifice and the pain that was involved. When we know from scripture that there is an invisible, spiritual host that has our back. Why do we doubt? It's a question I ask myself. Turn to Hebrews 10. Confidence is something that is built.

Hebrews 10:35 *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.*

36) *For you have need of endurance [so confidence is linked to endurance], so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:*

37) *“For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

38) *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”*

39) *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. (NKJV)*

We have to have confidence. Hebrews 13, a few pages over, in verse 6.

Hebrews 13:6 *So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (NKJV)*

1 John 5:14 *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

15) *And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (NKJV)*

But we have to have confidence. Notice Paul's confidence in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

2 Timothy 4:6 *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

7) *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

8) *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (NKJV)*

You see the confidence there? Philippians 1:6. This is one of my favorite scriptures. When I have been discouraged, when I have faced challenges, I remember this scripture.

Philippians 1:6 *... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (NKJV)*

I'm the clay, He is the potter. I can't make myself. He is at work and He will complete that work.

The Seventh Major C - Conversion

To be in God's Kingdom, we have to change and we have to be changed. We have to complete our mission. (Are you read for a couple of C's?) Yehovah wants the "cream of the crop". He will call out the bad. A parable we are all familiar with is in Matthew 13:24.

Matthew 13:24 *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25) but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26) But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27) So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28) He said to them, 'An enemy has done this. The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up? 29) But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30) Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'" (NKJV)*

We are going to be sifted. Yehovah will get rid of the bad and He will keep the good. An interesting scripture is in Luke 22:31.

Luke 22:31 *And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32) But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." (NKJV)*

You notice it said that Satan asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I prayed for you. He didn't just tell Satan "No! leave him alone!" Instead, He prayed that Peter's faith would not fail and that he would have the strength to deal with what Satan was going to do. Turn to Isaiah 5. This is a poetic chapter. Yehovah will get rid of the "wild grapes" that are bitter. He tells the story.

Isaiah 5:1 *Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. 2) He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes. 3) And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. 4) What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes? 5) And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.*

6) *I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds That they rain no rain on it.”*
7) *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help. (NKJV)*

Yehovah wants the “cream of the crop”. He doesn’t want the bitter grapes, He doesn’t want the tares, He wants the good stuff.

Another element of conversion is that we are to become childlike.

Notice Matthew 18:2.

Matthew 18:2 *Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,*

3) *and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

4) *Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

5) *Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.*

6) *But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (NKJV)*

That’s a powerful warning. We’re to become like children and then we are to take care of our fellow children and not offend them, because the consequences are huge. We’re to become a new creation. Turn to 2 Corinthians 5:17.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

18) *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,*

19) *that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

20) *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. (NKJV)*

What an invitation. We are to become a new creation. We are to become circumcised of heart. Another C there. Look at Jeremiah 9:25.

Jeremiah 9:25 *Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised*

26) *Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.” (NKJV)*

Jeremiah 4:4.

Jeremiah 4:4 *Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings.*” (NKJV)

Circumcise our hearts because when our hearts are uncircumcised we are involved in doing evil. Turn to Colossians 2:8, to stack on top of this.

Colossians 2:8 *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*

9) *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;*

10) *and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*

11) *In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,*

12) *buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

13) *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses ...* (NKJV)

So we have to have a clean heart. We can't earn salvation but we can earn eternal death. Romans 6:21.

Romans 6:21 *What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*

22) *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*

23) *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (NKJV)

We can't earn salvation but we can earn death.

In conclusion—a C word—as I bring the sermon to a close, I'm suggesting that we carefully consider our *calling*, our *commitment*, our *courage* in the face of our challenges, our *connection* and our relationship with our heavenly Father. Our current *capabilities* and growth, our *confidence* in faith in Yehovah and our *conversion*. How do our thoughts and actions stack up against what they should be. It's never too late and always a good time “to focus on the fundamentals”.