

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



LUKE

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# When Prayer Seems Unanswered

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 5, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 1:5**

## Outline

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## Introduction

The Christmas story is found in Luke 1 and 2, and would you open to Luke chapter 1, because tucked away in the Christmas story is a lesson about prayer. Now the Christian lives by prayer. Prayer is to your spiritual life what breath is to your body, and prayer can do anything that God can do, and God can do anything. We are fools if we don't learn to pray. And I have to keep telling myself that, because there's a part of me that does not want to pray: and I know what part that is: it's the flesh. The old flesh has to be grabbed by the scruff of the neck and dragged into the place of prayer. But there's another part in me that desires to pray and loves to pray, and I thank God for that. And I don't know whether you've felt that battle raging in you, but that battle rages in me often.

But sometimes we're perplexed when we pray because we pray and it seems that our prayer is unanswered. And our study tonight is simply this: "When Prayer seems Unanswered."

Now before we even get to the problem of answered prayer, let me talk to you about the tragedy of un-offered prayer. Some of the reasons that we don't have prayer answered is we, we have not even asked. James says in the Book of James, "You have not because you ask not."

I found this little piece of poetry, and it says this: Listen to it. It's great.

I got up early one morning  
and rushed right into the day;  
I had so much to accomplish  
that I didn't have time to pray.  
Troubles just tumbled about me

and heavier came each task;  
Why doesn't God help me? I wondered;  
He answered, "You didn't ask!"  
I wanted to see joy and beauty,  
but the day toiled on grey and bleak;  
I wondered why God didn't show me,  
But He said, "You didn't seek!"  
I tried to come into God's presence,  
I used all the keys in the lock;  
My God gently and lovingly chided,  
"My child, you didn't knock!"  
I woke up early this morning  
and paused before entering the day;  
I had so much to accomplish  
That I hadn't taken time to pray.

There is the problem of unasked prayer. But let's think a little bit about the problem of unanswered prayer, when we pray and nothing seems to happen. Let's look, beginning in chapter 1 and verse 5—Luke chapter 1 and verse 5: "And there was, in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless—that is, these were good folks. But now notice—And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they were both now well stricken in years. And it came to pass that while he—that is, Zacharias—while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was—or his duty was—to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense—they were outside praying; Zacharias is on the inside of the temple offering incense—And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard—now just underscore that—thy prayer is heard; and thy wife, Elisabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John—now this is referring to John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus—Thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. And he—that is, John the Baptist—shall be great in the sight of the Lord. He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

And many of the children of Israel shall he call to the Lord, their God. And he shall go before him—that is, before God—in the spirit and power of Elias—that is, Elijah—to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Now here’s Zacharias. He’s in the temple. He and his wife, Elisabeth, as we’re going to see, have been praying for many years for a child, and the prayer was not answered. And then, finally, in a later time, an angel comes and says, “Zachariah, Zacharias, your prayer has been heard. You’re going to have a child.”

Now when prayer seems unanswered, let me give you some reasons why.

## **I. The Answer May Be Denied**

First of all, the answer may be denied. God may just simply deny. God may say no. Not every prayer is answered. Not all prayer is heard before God. It is obvious that Zacharias and Elisabeth were on praying ground, however. Look in verse 6: “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.” But sometimes we ask for things that are out of the will of God, and God says no. First John chapter 5, verses 14: “And this is the confidence that we have in him: if we ask Him any thing according to His will, He hears us.”

Now when Jesus gave us the model prayer, He told us to pray what? “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” Prayer is not some way to get earth’s will done in heaven, but to get, get heaven’s will done on earth. And so nothing lies outside the reach of prayer but that that lies outside the will of God. And prayer is not bending God’s will to fit our will. Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. So sometimes, God simply says no!

And God does not hear our prayers because we are outside of His will. And, you can pray and pray and pray, but God is not going to answer prayer that is outside of His will.

Sometimes our prayers are utterly selfish rather than God-centered. Put down in your margin James chapter 4, verses 1 through 4. James says, “And whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not, hence, even of your lusts—that means strong desires—that war in your members? You lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.” Now that’s one reason we don’t get our prayers answered, but now notice the rest of it. “Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss—that is, you ask wrongly], that you might consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Do you know what the word enmity means? It’s talking about warfare. Now when he’s saying adulterers and adulteresses, he’s not talking literally; he’s talking spiritually. You see, Christ is, the bridegroom and we’re the

bride. And if we want anything that the bridegroom does not want, we are flirting with this world, which is an unclean harlot that would, take away our love for our Lord and Savior and the bridegroom. And to love this world is spiritual adultery, and it is warfare with God. So he says, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is, is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Don’t have a girlfriend called “This World.” If you are a Spirit-filled man and if you’re a Spirit-filled woman, don’t have a boyfriend called “This World.” That is spiritual adultery.

So why would God finance your spiritual adultery? Now if there’s a man and a woman and they’re married, and then the woman takes up with a man who’s not her husband, and she and her boyfriend want to go to New Orleans, to have a night on the town, it’d be a little obscure, wouldn’t it, for she, this woman, to come to her true husband. Say, “Husband, I need a thousand dollars. My boyfriend and I are going to New Orleans to have a good time. Would you mind giving us a thousand dollars?” That is, would you finance our worldliness? Would you finance our debauchery? Would you finance our sin? Of course not!

Now, many times, we ask God for things in the same way. We ask God to underwrite our worldliness. We ask God to underwrite our carnality. Why should God give us more strength to serve the devil? “We ask and receive not because we ask amiss, that we might consume it upon our lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God...”

And so, first of all, sometimes God doesn’t hear our prayer, or He hears our prayer and He simply says no. Whenever you pray about anything and the answer doesn’t come, ask yourself this question: Are my motives pure? Are my motives pure? Am I earnestly, sincerely, with all of my heart, seeking the will of God? And sometimes the answer, therefore, may be simply denied.

## **II. The Answer May Be Strategically Delayed**

But, number two, and here’s where we’re going to close in a minute. You may be asking in the will of God, and the answer is not simply denied; it is strategically—and I want to underscore the word strategically—it is strategically delayed.

Now you’re in chapter, 1 of Luke. Look, if you will, in verse 13: “But the angel said unto him, Zacharias; Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard...” Now the King James translates it “is heard.” It may be translated, “Your prayer was heard.” I mean, it was heard back in the past. As a matter of fact, Zacharias and Elisabeth had stopped prayed. They’d asked and they’d asked and their prayer wasn’t heard, and so they thought well, we must be praying out of the will of God. But the angel said unto him,

Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard—literally, was heard—and thy wife, Elisabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”

Now, evidently, they had given up praying and their hope for a son. They’d been asking God, “O God, give us a son. God, give us a son. Please give us a son.” They got older and older and older. And, finally, it dawned on them that they were too old, humanly speaking, to have a child. And when God said to Zacharias, “You’re going to have a son,” notice what he said. Go over to verse 18 and look at it: “And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well stricken in years.” And yet, God had heard the prayer. When he was young, and when he was able to have a child, and they’d been asking and asking and asking, and God didn’t answer the prayer. Now when they, perhaps, they have, in despair, quit asking, now he’s an old man and God appears to him in the form of an angel, or the angel of the Lord comes to him and says, “Zacharias, you and Elisabeth are going to have a child.”

Now here is the point, and I want you to listen carefully. God had heard his prayer, and God had granted his request years ago, and now God is going to present the answer to a prayer that was heard years and years ago. God just simply delayed the answer until Zacharias had, as it were, given up hope, and then God says, “Your prayer was heard. Your prayer was heard.”

I’ll give you another example of the same thing, of a prayer that was heard, but it doesn’t seem like it was heard, and, people have had to wait and wait. For example, Daniel in the Book of Daniel, you might be interested. Put down Daniel chapter 10 and begin in verse 12: The angel who came to Daniel with an answer to prayer. Daniel was perplexed. He was seeking the will, the will of God. He was seeking information and insight. And the angel comes to Daniel, and here’s what he says: Daniel 10, verse 12: “And he said unto me, Fear not, Daniel; or Fear not, Daniel; from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thy self before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words—that is, I’ve come to you to minister to you because you prayed. But the prince of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.” Now I want you to forget the last part of that verse because it’s very convoluted and very complicated. All I want you to do is get the first part of that verse.

Daniel has been praying, he’s been praying, and he’s been praying, and he’s been praying, and he prays for twenty-one days. But God says to him, “Daniel, you were heard the first time you prayed, the very first time.” The minute you set out to get the thing answered, when you said, “God, I am going to seek your face, I’m going to fast and pray, I’m going to afflict myself. And, Lord, I’m going to pray until the answer

comes.” And kept on praying and praying and praying and praying, but he was praying after the answer had already come. He didn’t have it in his hand, but God had it in His heart and in His mind to answer the prayer.

Zacharias and Elisabeth had prayed and asked God for a son. God said, “Your prayer is answered.” But then the days come, the years come, the years come, the years come. The time for childbearing is past. And then the angel says, “Oh, yes, Zacharias, I heard your prayer, or God heard your prayer way back yonder.”

Daniel is praying and praying and praying and praying. The angel says, “Hey, Dan, son, your prayer was heard when you prayed to begin with. Now you kept on praying, and there’s nothing wrong with that, but I want you to know that your prayer was heard.”

You see, the answer was delayed. Now God, God delays sometimes the answer. We, we don’t have the answer, and yet we do have it. In Mark chapter 11 and verse 24, the Williams translation says this. Jesus is speaking. It’s a prayer promise. “So then I tell you, whenever you pray and ask for anything and have faith—now notice this—that it has been given you, then you will get it.” Sounds contradictory, doesn’t it? Have faith that it has been given you and you’ll get it. That is, believe that you’ve got it and you will get it. Now it doesn’t take a whole lot of faith to believe that you have something when you already have it, but it, to believe that you have something when you don’t have it, that’s faith. And, and I know that sounds a little strange, but Jesus is saying, “So I tell you that whenever you pray and ask for anything, have faith that it has been given you, and you will get it.” That is, you may have it, but God delays the answer. It took a long time for the prayer of Elisabeth and Zacharias to be answered for John the Baptist.

Now why does God wait? Well, remember, we said that the answer may be simply denied or it may be strategically delayed. God has a purpose in delaying the answer to your prayers. And, you may be familiar with Isaiah chapter 30 and verse 18, which says, “Therefore, will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted. Therefore, will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted.” God is in the business of getting glory to Himself.

And so why does God delay the answer to prayer? Why did God delay this answer to prayer, for example, of Zacharias and Elisabeth? They had prayed. Their hearts were not wrong. Their hearts were right. Go back again to verse 6: “...and they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.” They asked God for something perfectly legitimate and it did not come. Why? Well, God has two reasons, two primary reasons for delaying your prayer. Number one: He wants to display His glory, and number two: He wants to dispense His grace. Now let’s talk about those.

God wants to display His glory. With God, timing is far more important than time.

What God did with, Elisabeth and with Zacharias was to wait, until humanly, it was impossible. I refer you again to verse 18: “And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this?—in other words, “It’s hard for me to take this in, angel”—seeing I am an old man, and my wife is well stricken in years.” Humanly, it’s impossible. Now what God sometimes allows things to do is to get worse when we pray rather than better, so that when it does happen, there’s no way to explain it, except God.

Maybe you have an unsaved husband. Maybe you’re a precious woman in this church and you’ve been praying for your husband, and he hasn’t come to Christ. As a matter of fact, your husband is getting worse and worse and worse. One of these days, you may just throw up your hand and say, “He is impossible!” And then, God’s going to step in and save him. You think about it. God waits, sometimes, until the situation gets so bad that the only way that, the answer to prayer can be explained is supernatural.

Again, God promised Abraham—we talked about this this morning—God promised Abraham and Sarah a son. And, time came and time passed, and time came and time passed, and time came and time passed. And Abraham got antsy and he co-opted his wife’s maid, Hagar, produced an Ishmael—the whole world is in turmoil because of this—because he could not wait on God. He could not understand, therefore, “...will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you.” When, finally, God gave them a son, the only way that it could be explained was God. And God got the glory. God waited until Abraham was 100 years old, Sarah was 90 years old. And God had to get the glory out of that. Genesis 17, verse 17: “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is 100 years old? And shall Sarah, that is 90 years old, bear?” Yes, He did. Who got the glory? God did. Now if they’d had had a child younger, than that, when they were of childbearing age; well, that’s something to be grateful for, but not much of a miracle to shout about.

Let me give you another example. We’re just talking about God delaying. God delaying with Zacharias and Elisabeth. We’re talking about God delaying with Daniel and waiting. We’re talking about God delaying with Abraham and Sarah.

I’ll give you another example. It’s found in John chapter 11, and it’s with Lazarus. Lazarus got sick, and you can read John chapter 11—well, let’s just turn to it a moment. You’re in Luke 1. Just fast forward over there to John chapter 11. And I think it’s worth reading together. Begin in verses 1 through 6 and read with me: “Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister, Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick) —she was a great lady; I mean, she had a devotional love for Jesus. Therefore, his sisters sent unto him—that is, Lazarus’ sisters sent to Jesus—saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. And when Jesus heard that,

he said—now listen to this—This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God—underscore that—for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus—no doubt about His love for them. And when he had heard, therefore, that he—Lazarus—was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was—get this: He loves them. He hears that Lazarus is sick. He deliberately waits two days—And after that, He saith to his disciples, Let's go into Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again. And Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day?" and so forth.

Jesus here delays to come. And then, finally, when He does come, you know that Lazarus has died and Lazarus is in the grave. He's been in the grave for four days. Here was a deliberate and purposeful postponement. Mary is pouting. Mary rebukes Him. Lazarus is getting weaker and weaker. Where is Jesus? Why doesn't Jesus come? Jesus could do something. Where is He? Is Jesus ignorant? Doesn't He know? No, He knows. Is Jesus indifferent? Well, He loves. Is Jesus impotent? No, He can do it. Then where is Jesus? Remember what Jesus said in John 11, verse 4: "...this sickness is for the glory of God..."

Go down to, John 11 and verse 40. After Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, He said to her, "...Saith I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Now question: If Jesus had come and just healed Lazarus, that would have brought some thankfulness and some gratefulness. But what about when Jesus waited until it was humanly impossible, and brought Lazarus out of the grave, did that not give credence to the glory of God?

Now let me give a cardinal rule about prayer. Here's a cardinal rule about prayer. God always answers prayer in a way that will give Him the greatest glory. Now that's a cardinal rule. Don't miss that. God always takes the route in answered prayer that brings Him the greatest glory. And that's the secret to all answered prayer.

In John 14, verse 13, Jesus said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do—now listen. Here's the rationale—I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." That's the purpose of answered prayer. Now if you're praying and your heart, your motivation is not for the glory of God, don't expect to get your prayers answered.

Now sometimes God delays in order that He might get the greater glory. We know that that's what happened, with, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Sometimes God's delays are to display His glory. That's what He did here. But that's what He did with Zacharias and Elisabeth.

But here's the second reason that God delays. Not only to display His glory, but to dispense His grace. Now, you see, Jesus came in the fullness of time. John the Baptist

was to be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the birth of John the Baptist was linked with the coming of Jesus Christ.

Go back again to, to, Luke chapter 1 and look at that passage here. Look particularly in Luke chapter 1 and look in verse 17. The angel is speaking of John the Baptist.

“And he—John—shall go before him—Jesus—in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just...”

John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now here’s a question, or here’s the thing that we need to think about. What if, what if the prayer of Elisabeth and Zacharias had been answered many years ago? Then the timing would have been completely wrong, and, and John would not have been there to be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, God had waited for 4,000 years to bring Jesus Christ right at the exact, precise moment to be the forerunner for the Lord Jesus Christ and prepare the way of the Lord. Now had God given them a baby before, that would have been nice. But God had such a greater blessing. God wants to display His glory and God wants to dispense His grace. And the problem with many of us is we want to pick the blessings before they’re ripe. If God says no to you today, it’s because He’s got a bigger blessing tomorrow. You may not understand it, but that happens. That happened to these folks. Had they had that child earlier, that child could never have had the prominence that he had for all history. And I preached about him this morning, as he stood on the brink of Jordan, pointed to the Lamb of God, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, Jesus, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

### **III. The Answer May Be Significantly Different**

Your prayer may be specifically denied. You may be trying to pray out of the will of God. Your prayer may be strategically delayed to display God’s glory, to dispense God’s grace. Thirdly, and finally, your prayer may be significantly different. You may ask God for one thing and God gives you something else, and you think your prayer wasn’t answered. But it was answered. Now, again, go back and, and look in Luke chapter 1 and begin in verse 13: “And the angel said, Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard—And, again, I remind you that that may be translated, “thy prayer was heard.” In other words, it was an accomplished fact a long time ago; it just had a delayed detonation—thy prayer was heard; and thy wife, Elisabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”

Now what they were praying for was a son, when they were young. But God gave them something different. God gave them a son while they were old.

“And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he

shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. And, many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord, their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias..."

Now suppose that their prayer had been answered when they were young. Suppose they said, "O God, we want a baby, we want a baby. Please, God, give us a baby," and God gave them a baby. Just another baby boy. That would have been wonderful, and we all rejoice in the babies that God gives us, but God waited to give them John the Baptist. Jesus said, "Not a greater was born of woman than John the Baptist." God did not give them what they asked for—a child in their youth; God gave them something significantly different than what they asked for—a child in their old age, but God saved the best for last.

Now Psalm 34 and verse 10 is interesting here. It says, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the LORD shall not want—now listen to this phrase—any good thing."

And then Psalm 84, verse 11: "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

And so, why should you complain if God withholds anything if He withholds no good thing? I mean, if God will not withhold any good thing, then don't complain about anything God withholds. God, if God withholds something from you, and you're in the will of God and you're praying and you don't get it, if God gives you something, if God doesn't give you what you ask, and you're in the will of God, God will give you something better than you asked if your heart is right and you're willing to conform yourself to the will of God.

Have you ever asked God for something and you didn't get it, and later on your eyes were opened, and you thanked God for unanswered prayer? Have you? This is a silly illustration, but when I was a kid, I saw an old car I wanted. I could have bought it for \$125.00. I said, "O God, I need that car. Just think of the places I could go in that car." Just a kid, hardly old enough to drive. This man had this car. My brother-in-law had it, the man who was going to be my brother-in-law. John had it. John said, "I'm going to sell that car for \$125." I got on my knees and I said, "God, please, I need that \$125 because I need that car." God didn't hear my prayer. You know, somebody got that car and the motor literally fell out of it, just fell out of it. I don't know how a motor can fall out of a car, but the motor fell out of this car, and I had to say, "Thank You, Lord, for not hearing my prayer and buying me that car." Ruth Graham, the husband of Dr. Billy Graham, said, "I thank God for unanswered prayer." She said, "If God had heard my prayer, I would have married the wrong man on seven different occasions" praying for

somebody to be her husband and thinking this is the one, and God says, “No, that’s not the one; no, that’s not the one; that’s not the one.”

You see, prayer may be specifically denied. It may be strategically delayed. It may be, it may be significantly different. They asked God for one thing and God gave them something else.

On a more serious note, I had a heartache; I mean, a genuine heartache, a deep heartache, something that ripped my guts out, if you’ll pardon that inelegant expression. And I prayed. I stained heaven with my prayers. I said, “God, there’s something I want You to do,” and I prayed and fasted and wept before God. And the answer didn’t come. The thing I asked God for, it did not come. I even shouted at God, not irreverently, but I shouted at God, “Why, God, why?” But the answer didn’t come. And one day, God spoke to me—not out loud, but He spoke to me, and, I mean, He clearly spoke to me. He said, “Adrian, I’ve heard your prayer. I heard your prayer a long time ago. You’re asking me to do something that I’m not going to do. You’re asking me to reach in and change somebody’s heart against their will, and I don’t operate that way. I’m not going to do it. But, Adrian, I know the need of your heart. I know what you want. I know what you need. And your prayer is heard.” As I look back, I see how clear that was and how great our God is. What a mighty God we serve. If God doesn’t give us what we ask, I’ll tell you, friend, He will give us something better and sweeter than we ask if we ask Him in the wonderful name of Jesus.

You know, the Apostle Paul said in Romans 8, verse 26: “For we know not what we should ask as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.”

Sometimes our prayers are denied. Sometimes our prayers are delayed. Sometimes our prayers are different. And the Holy Spirit says, “Father, this is what he’s asking, but let me tell You, Father, what he really needs,” and the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us.

So if you pray and your prayer seems unanswered, what should you do? First of all, check up. Is your heart clean? Is your motive clear? Are you really praying for the glory of God, or that you might consume it upon your lust?

Secondly, keep on praying. Don’t stop praying until you have the answer in your hand or in your heart, or until God tells you no. Luke 18, verse 1: “And he spake a parable unto them that, to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.” Matthew 7, verses 7 through 11, Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” And the construction of that in the Greek verb is simply this: keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. And so, just pray, pray until you have the answer in your hand or you have the answer in your

heart. Just pray until the burden is gone. And pray until you have what you ask, or you have the peace in your heart that God has heard your prayer, or until you have the understanding that God has told you no.

Sometimes, God will simply tell you no, and you may not be carnal or selfish. You just don't know what you need to ask for, just like the prayer I was talking to you about so long ago. Second Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul took a journey into heaven. He saw things, sacred secrets not lawful for him to even utter when he came back. And, and he had such a vision of glory that there was the danger of pride and, and 2 Corinthians 12, verse 7, he said, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure."

We don't know what that thorn in the flesh was, but the word for thorn there is not the word for a thorn like on a rose; it's like a stake upon which he was impaled. And he says this: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." Now that, that doesn't mean, "Lord, take it away; Lord, take it away; Lord, take it away." He had three extended sessions of prayer, three times seeking the face of God. "And he said, and he said to me—God said to Paul—my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness, most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God said, "Paul, I'm not going to take away the thorn in your flesh. I'm going to give you greater grace." Now Paul didn't say, what can't be cured has to be endured. He said, "It, it'll be enjoyed." He said, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities and persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I'm weak, then I'm strong."

#### **IV. The Answer May Be Direct**

All right. We're finished. But when you pray and prayer seems unanswered, number one: the answer may be denied; number two: it may be delayed; number three: it may be different. And number four: it just may be direct. So many times I have prayed and God has given me an answer to prayer; I mean, absolutely so quickly there's no shadow of any doubt but what it was God Almighty. You've all had that experience.

I believe I've seen God heal my body just like that in answer to prayer. I believe I've seen God heal my automobile just like that in answer to prayer.

I was on a back road one time going to revival meeting. My car stopped running right in the middle doing 65 miles an hour and the motor cut off, and it stopped. I don't know much about mechanics, but everybody gets out and looks under the hood. I looked under the hood. I got in there, not anybody in sight. I am miles from anybody. I have to be there that night. Now it may sound silly to you, but I cranked and cranked and

cranked until my battery was just about dead, and that car would not even cough. It wouldn't do anything. So what am I going to do? I said, "Lord, in the Bible, You healed bodies. And if You're the Great Physician, You're bound to be the great mechanic". And it may sound silly to you, but I laid hands on that car and I prayed and I said, "God, whatever is wrong with this car, I want You to fix it now in the name of Jesus. Got in and turned the key—"Brrrrrrrrrrrr", just like that. To this day I don't know what was wrong with it. I believe God just healed my car.

## **Conclusion**

I believe in the answer to prayer. It may be denied. It may be delayed. It may be different. It may be direct. But we need to keep on praying till God gives us what we ask or till God says no.

Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Father God, thank You for letting us have this time together in Your Word. And, Lord, we want to say what the disciples said so long ago, "Lord, teach us to pray." Teach us to want to pray, to spend time in prayer, and teach us, Lord, how to pray, and how to pray even when prayer seems unanswered. For we pray in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

# When Prayer Seems Unanswered

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 23, 1990**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 1:5–13**

*“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”*

LUKE 1:13

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel according to Luke chapter 1. I want to talk to you today about prayer. Today is a nationwide call to prayer and I want to talk to you on this subject, "When Prayer Seems Unanswered."

Now that's a problem to many of us. We hear that we are to pray and indeed we should, but so many times we pray and our prayer seems unanswered. Look if you will in Luke chapter 1 beginning in verse 5, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all of the commandments and ordinance of the Lord, blameless and they had no child because that Elizabeth was barren. And they were both now well stricken in years.

And it came to pass while he executed the priest office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priests' office, his lot was—that is Zacharias' duty was—to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without—that is they were standing outside and they were praying at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the

Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And when Zacharias saw him he was troubled and fear fell upon him. And the angel said unto him—and here is the key verse—fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard. And thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son and they shall call his name John. And they shall have joy and gladness and many shall rejoice at his birth for he shall be great in the sight of the Lord and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

## **I. The Problem of Unoffered Prayer**

Now, when we pray, we have to ask the question sometimes, "Why doesn't God answer my prayer. Why does my prayer seem to be, at any rate, unanswered?" You know, first of all, sometimes our prayers are not answered, very frankly, because we haven't asked.

There's the problem of unasked prayer, unoffered prayer. Have you ever thought how many commands in the Bible there are to pray? Whether you understand it or not, the Bible commands us to pray. As a matter of fact, in 1 Samuel chapter 12, verse 23, Samuel said, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. Prayerlessness, very plainly, is a sin. The Bible has commanded that we pray.

First Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 17, the Bible commands that we are to pray without ceasing. We're never to stop praying. Luke 18, verse 1, "and He spake a parable unto them to this end that men ought all ways to pray", always to pray. Mark 14, verse 38, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Very frankly, many of us are failing simply because we do not pray.

There is no substitute for prayer—not eloquence, not energy, not enthusiasm, not intellect. There is no substitute for prayer. I came across this the other day—I want to share it with you.

I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day. I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to pray. Have you ever been there? So much to do, I didn't have time pray. Problems just tumbled about me and heavier came each task. Why doesn't God help me, I wonder. He answered, "You didn't ask." I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on grey and bleak. I wondered why God didn't show me. But He said, "but you didn't seek." I tried to come into God's presence, I used all the keys on the lock. God gently and lovingly chided, my son, you didn't knock. I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day. I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray.

## **II. The Problem of Unanswered Prayer**

Amen? Listen, friend, if you are too busy to pray, you're too busy. There is the problem of unoffered prayer, but what about the other problem, unanswered prayer? We do pray, we do seek God, we do beg, we do try to get right, and ask God according to His will and yet our prayer seems to be unanswered. Let me give you three thoughts that I want you to carry home with you today.

### **A. The Answer to Prayer May Be Simply Denied**

First of all, your prayer may seem to be answered because it has simply been denied. God cannot and God will not answer your prayer because you are not asking according to His will and He cannot give you that which is not according to His will. It's very obvious here that Zacharias was a man walking with the Lord, knowing the will of the Lord.

Look if you will in chapter 1, verse, 6 speaking of Zacharias and Elizabeth and it says, "they were both righteous before God, walking in all of the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless." And so, these people were on praying ground. Very frankly many of us don't get our prayers answered because we are not on praying ground. You might put in your margin James chapter 4, verses 1 through 4. James is very practical. James doesn't beat around the bush. James asks this question, "From whence comes wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lust that war in your members?" He's saying people fight on the outside, because they're at war with themselves on the inside. And then James says, "you lust and have not, ye kill and desire to have and cannot obtain, ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not." Now that deals with unoffered prayer.

You have not because you ask not. But, then he says, "you ask and receive not that you might consume it upon your lusts. You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that friendship with the world is warfare with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Very frankly, very frankly, God cannot answer some of our prayers because they are selfish. We ask and receive not because we ask amiss. You say, Adrian, can't I ask God for my personal needs? Of course you can, but not for your selfish needs. There is a difference, God wants to meet every one of your personal needs, but God does not want to feed your lust and your pride and your selfishness and, if you are a friend of this world, and you're asking God to make you a stronger person, why should God give you more strength to serve the devil?

God calls friendship with the world spiritual adultery. Suppose there is a woman who is married to a man and she is unfaithful to her husband and she has a boyfriend and she comes to her husband and says, Husband, would you give me some money to go to New Orleans and spend a weekend with my boyfriend? Why would he underwrite her

sin? Why would God underwrite your spiritual adultery? Why should God give you more strength to serve the devil?

Very frankly, our prayers sometimes are not answered because we are not like Elizabeth and we are not like Zacharias. We are not on praying ground. We are not praying according to the will of God. Prayer is not some sort of exercise where we get our will on earth done in heaven, but where God in heaven gets His will done on earth. Prayer is not some way where we bend God's will to fit our will, but prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it.

Put this verse down also in your margin, 1 John chapter 5, verses 14 and 15. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask him anything according to his will he heareth us according to his will he heareth us, and if we know that he heareth whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we've desired of him." And so sometimes, folks, very plainly, we're just simply asking with sin in our heart, out of the will of God, and our prayers are simply denied.

### **B. The Answer to Prayer May Be Strategically Delayed**

Now, having said that, let's tighten the focus a little bit and give you the second reason sometimes that prayers seem unanswered. Sometimes it is, very frankly, unanswered, or it's answered, and God says no. The second reason however, not only is prayer sometimes simply denied because it is out of the will of God, but sometimes, dear friend, it is strategically delayed. Strategically delayed. You see, with God, timing is far more important than time; and God answers, but sometimes not when you think He should, but when it will be far better for His glory and your good for Him to answer.

Now look at our verse in verse 13, "And the angels said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias for thy prayer is heard." Now the Greek construction of this can be and I think ought to be rendered right here, was heard, was heard. Is heard is acceptable, but it may be translated, was heard. If you read this whole thing in its context, the idea is that Elizabeth and Zacharias had been praying and praying and praying. They were young and they were saying, "O God, we want a son. O God, give us a child, O God, Elizabeth is barren, please God, please give us a son." And they had no son. As a matter of fact when the angel comes now and tells Zacharias he's going to have a son. Zacharias, he doesn't even really accept it right away. I mean, he has ceased expecting an answer to his prayer. But the glorious thing is that a long time ago Zacharias' prayer was answered. God had granted his prayer a long time ago and now God is now going to give today what God had granted a long time ago, and that prayer, my dear friend, that you think may not be answered, God has answered it. But He's just now giving you the answer, or waiting to give you the answer to your prayer.

Sometimes prayers are delayed and they're strategically delayed. I think about another example of delayed prayer, prayer that has been granted, but not yet given.

You remember Daniel in the book of Daniel? Put this verse down, Daniel chapter 10. Daniel had been praying and seeking an answer from God and in verse 12 we read this, the angel came to Daniel and he said, "then he said unto me, fear not Daniel from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand and to chasten thyself before God, thy words were heard. And I am come for thy word. But the prince of Persia—that's the prince of Iran—withstood me one and 20 days. And lo Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia."

Now that is a very enigmatic and hard to understand passage of Scripture, ha. God said, "Daniel from the very time that you began to pray your prayer was heard", but it was 21 days later when Daniel received the answer. You see, God may grant a prayer without giving the answer until a delayed time, until a later time. Let me give you a verse, Mark 11, verse 24, this impinges on all that I'm going to say right here and I want to give it to you in Williams translation, because I think it makes it abundantly clear. Here's what Williams translation says, "so then I tell you, whenever you pray and ask for anything, have faith that it has been given you and you will get it." Have faith that it has been given you ha and you will get it. That is, God says you're going to get what you already have. Just believe that you have it. Now if you already have it and believe that you have it, that's not faith, but when you don't have it and believe that you have it then that's faith. Just believe that it has already been given you and you will have it.

You see, years ago, years ago, God had given Zacharias and Elizabeth, God had given them a son. Years ago. And the angel comes and says to Zacharias, now he's an old man and his wife is old. He says, well stricken in years. And then God says, your prayer was heard—your prayer was heard. I think there are many of us who have asked God for something and we think that God hasn't heard our prayer; but, dear friend, our prayer was heard. And we're waiting on God to give us what He has granted us. Why does God delay? Well again, I want to tell you, dear friend, that with God, timing is far more important than time. Here's a wonderful verse. I love this verse, listen to it, Isaiah chapter 30 and verse 18, "And therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you." Isn't that beautiful? Oh listen, if you have been asking God for something and you really feel it is in the will of God and for God's glory and your heart is clean and pure, and the answer doesn't come, "and therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you and therefore will he be exalted." Now wait a minute, God wants to be gracious to you, and God wants to give glory unto Himself. God's grace and God's glory are one of the reasons that God waits. Now watch it, "therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you and therefore will he be exalted." God is going to answer your prayer when it will give to Him the greatest glory that He may have mercy upon you for the Lord is a God of judgment, that is a God of intelligence, a God of discrimination, a God of wisdom, the Lord is a God of Judgment. "Blessed are all they that wait for him."

Oh, my friend, don't quit waiting on God, God is waiting for you to wait on Him. And God wants you to wait on Him. Now, why does God delay? For example, why did God not give Zacharias and Elizabeth a son when they first asked? Why did the angel come and say when they were old, your prayer was heard, your prayer was heard. Why did God wait? May I submit two reasons to you?

### **1. To Display God's Glory**

First of all to display His glory—to display His glory. Remember our verse, therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you and therefore will he be exalted. You see, God waited until the situation was impossible. Luke 1 and verse 18, "and Zacharias said unto the angel, whereby shall I know this, for I am an old man. And my wife is well stricken in years." Zacharias is saying, if God does it now, it'll be a miracle. As a matter of fact it's just beyond my comprehension. How can God do it now? My dear friend, God did it. When it was well nigh humanly impossible. And all the time they're praying, God give us a son, God give us a son, God give us a son, and Elizabeth is getting older, and older, and older, and she goes through the menopause, and she passes the time of child bearing.

May I tell you this, dear friend, that many times when you pray, on the road for things to get better, they get worse. They're praying for a son, and the situation is getting worse, and worse, and worse. Some of you women have unsaved husbands, you've been praying for that husband and he's getting meaner and meaner, now don't say amen out loud, but, you're praying for him, and you're saying, O God, bring my husband to You. And rather than the situation getting better, it is getting worse, and worse, and worse. That's the way it was with Elizabeth. That's the way it was with Zacharias. But, my dear friend, when it did happen, God got extraordinary glory.

The same thing with Abraham and Sarah. God said to them He was going to give them a son, and they're waiting and waiting and waiting. They tried to run Ishmael in as a substitute, but that didn't work, just brought the world all kinds of trouble. But my dear friend, when Abraham is 100 and Sarah is 90 then God gave them a son and God got glory.

Let me give you another example. This time I want you to turn to it, those of you are waiting for God to answer your prayer. Turn to John chapter 11 with me for just a moment. John chapter 11, and begin in verse one, "Now a certain man was sick named Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair who's brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore, his sisters sent unto Him saying, "Lord—now they are sending a message, this is a prayer, this is a prayer—Lord, behold he whom thy lovest is sick." When Jesus heard that He said, "this sickness is not unto death." Now if you have your Bible, just underscore this next phrase, "but for the glory of God that the Son of God

might be glorified thereby."

"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." I'm glad that's there because sometimes when God doesn't answer your prayer you may think that God doesn't love you. When God doesn't answer your prayer according to your schedule, that is. "When he had heard therefore that he was sick he abode two days in the same place where he was." Now just underscore the whole sixth verse. He loves them, He loves Mary, He loves Martha, He loves Lazarus, the word comes and says, Jesus, Lazarus needs you and Jesus deliberately delays. Jesus purposefully postpones. He just stays right there and after awhile He saith to His disciples, "let us go into Judea again." His disciples say unto Him, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone them, goest thou again?" and so now Jesus finally goes, and, and Mary and Martha are there wondering why doesn't He come, why doesn't He come, why doesn't He come? Lazarus is getting sicker, and sicker, and they're waiting on Jesus and Lazarus is getting weaker and weaker and finally Lazarus dies. And Mary and Martha, while they are waiting, say, why doesn't He come, is He ignorant? No, we told Him. Is He indifferent? No, He says He loves us. Is He impotent? No, He can do it. Why doesn't He come? Because He's waiting, my dear friend, till the situation got impossible that He might get glory to Himself.

You know how this story ended? Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. And if you will look in verse 40 there, here's the climax, Jesus said unto her, "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?" The glory of God. You see, my dear friend, God sometimes delays the answer to prayer until the situation gets so difficult there's no way that you are going to get the glory from it. Let me give you a cardinal rule. God always takes the route that brings Himself the greatest glory. God always takes the route that brings to Himself the greatest glory. And really, that's why we pray.

Have you ever thought about why we pray? Here's the reason we pray, if you pray incorrectly, John 14, verse 13, "and whatsoever you ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son." He doesn't say I'm going to do it that you have what you need. "Whatever you ask in prayer, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Is the desire of your life to have God glorified? You see, sometimes our prayers are strategically delayed to display God's glory.

## **2. To Dispense God's Grace**

Secondly, our prayers are strategically delayed to dispense God's grace. To dispense God's grace, you see, therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you. How gracious God was to Zacharias and Elizabeth. Go back if you will to Luke chapter one with me for a moment, and look at this wonderful, wonderful passage, and I want you to see God's grace to these people. Look if you will in verse 13. The Bible says, "Zacharias, thy prayer is heard, and thy wife, Elizabeth shall bear thee a son and

thy shall call his name John."

Now listen to this, "and thy shall have joy, and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth." You see, not only is God interested in His glory, but He was interested in their joy. Listen, "you are going to have joy and gladness and many shall rejoice at his birth. For ye shall be great in the sight of God. And it goes on to tell how he is going to be the greatest prophet, the last of the Old Testament prophets. Jesus said, of this son that was born, not a greater shall be born of woman than this one.

Oh, you see, God wanted to bless. God wanted to bless. God had such a wonderful plan. You see, God was about to bring the Messiah into the world, and the Messiah was to come in the fullness of time. That is He did not come one second too soon, not one second too late, it was all choreographed and prophesied in the Old Testament. And God had been waiting four thousand years to bring Messiah into the world and God wanted a forerunner who would be John the Baptist, and God is going to bless the world and so God has a strategic plan to display His glory and to dispense His grace.

God knows exactly what He's doing. Now, Zacharias didn't know it. Elizabeth didn't know it, not at that time, but God knew it.

### **C. The Answer to Prayer May Be Strangely Different**

Now here is the third thing I want to say to you. Sometimes prayer may be simply denied. We're praying out of the will of God. Sometimes prayer may be strategically delayed. God for His glory and for His grace waits that He may be gracious unto you. Now here's the third thing. Sometimes the answer to your prayer may be strangely different, strangely different, significantly different. Now what they had been praying for was a son in their youth. But, God gave them a son in their old age. Now, suppose they had been given a son in their youth. I'm sure they would have loved Him. I'm sure they would have said, thank you, Lord, I'm so grateful, Lord that you gave us this son. Thank you for hearing our prayer. Thank you for hearing our prayer immediately. We asked that we might have a child and you gave us a child. Thank you, Lord.

But God did not give them what they asked for. God gave them something better than they asked for. It was different, not only was it delayed, it was different. God saved the best to the last. This son that they got was a son filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. This son was the forerunner of the Messiah. Verse 17 says, "and he shall go before him, that is Jesus, in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children." Jesus said, "not a greater was born of woman than John the Baptist," Now don't you think she'd rather wait to have that said of her? You gave birth to the greatest human being born of a woman, that is, apart from the Messiah himself. Put these verses down—Psalm 34, verse 10, "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger. But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Put this verse down. Psalm 84, verse 11, "The Lord God is a sun and a shield, the Lord will give grace and

glory no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Now, my friend, if God withheld it from you, it wasn't good. I mean, why do you complain if God withholds something that for you was not good? You see, many times God doesn't give us what we ask. You know why God doesn't give us what we ask? He has something better than we asked. Ruth Graham, who is the wife of evangelist Billy Graham, is reported to have said, "If God had given me what I asked Him, I would have married the wrong man seven times. Or seven times I would have gotten married to someone who was not God's plan for me." You see, she said, God let me marry Billy, or I mean, Jimmy, or Ralph, or Hector or whomever it was that she thought she loved. But God had something better for her. I'm sure that Zacharias and Elizabeth had said, God, please, God, please, and God waited, and God waited, and God waited. Not only was the prayer strategically delayed, but, my dear friend, it was sweetly different, sovereignly different, strangely different, significantly different, and so much better.

For the last several years I have been praying about something. I have been praying, "O God, hear my prayer, God hear my prayer," and I've stained heaven with my prayer. But God said to me, some while back, "Adrian, I've heard your prayer. I know what you're asking for and I'm going to answer your prayer, not the way you think, but more wonderful than you think." What a peace that was to my heart.

Let me give you a verse. Romans chapter 8 and verse 26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." All of us are there sometimes. We pray, God, I think it's this, I think it's that, Lord, I don't know. We don't know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. Thank God, dear friend, we are asking for one thing and God the Holy Spirit, says, now Father, there's Adrian, he's down there asking for something, he's sincere, this is what he thinks he wants, but God, this is what he needs. Over here is Zacharias and Elizabeth praying and praying, and the Holy Spirit of God says, "Now Father, here's what Zacharias is asking for. Here's what Elizabeth is asking for. But, Father, here's what they really need. Here's what they need."

Sometimes the answer may be delayed, and sometimes the answer, my dear friend, may be different. Not very far from our house is a great big metal thing stuck on a pole. It's called a transformer. Power lines, big lines come into that transformer. Surging energy goes into that transformer. And somehow something happens in that transformer, and that energy is changed and a line goes into my house and puts energy into our toaster. My dear friend, if you took that energy off that wire and put it into our toaster without it going through that transformer, talk about burned toast, and toaster. I mean, it's all gone. Now it is the same energy, but it goes through a transformer that makes it adaptable and acceptable and that's the way it is with our prayers sometimes. It is the same energy, it is the same prayer, it is the same motivation, God knows our

desire for His glory, and God puts our prayers through the Holy Spirit that great transformer who makes intercession for us and He takes our prayers He makes them acceptable to the throne of grace and then our prayers are answered. Because sometimes we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groaning that cannot be uttered. Hallelujah for that.

Sometimes, prayer may be denied because we are out of the will of God. Sometimes prayer may be delayed for God's glory and for His grace, and sometimes, my dear friends prayers are different, but they are better. Ha, we used to have a preacher down in Florida—he was tongue-tied. His name was Ed Solomon—he was a great man of God. He was so wise. One time he was preaching in his own alma mater, I think I've told you this story, his college church, and they, he was there, and his wife was sitting out there, and in his tongue-tied way he said, God never did give me anything I wanted. He said, I never got to go to the school I wanted to go to. That was his alma mater. And he said, God didn't let me marry the woman I wanted to marry. And his wife was sitting right out there. And then he said, God never let me pastor the church I wanted to pastor. And his church people were out there. You talk about embarrassing. He said, God never did ever give me anything I ever wanted. But he said, God always gave me something better than I ever wanted. Oh, friend, listen, listen, God gives the best to those who leave the choice with Him. You just remember that. Sometimes prayer may be denied, sometimes prayer may be delayed, sometimes prayer may be different.

## **Conclusion**

Now what do you do then if you're praying and your prayer seems to be unanswered. First of all you check up: am I right with God, am I seeking the glory of God—am I? Am I asking for His glory, or that I might consume it upon my lust? If you are convinced that you are asking for the glory of God then continue to pray, just keep on praying, don't quit, pray and pray and pray, and pray. The Bible says that we are to pray without ceasing. Men ought always to pray, not to faint, and Jesus told about that woman who went to that unjust judge and she just wouldn't shut up. The Lord Jesus told about that man who needed to borrow bread from a friend and he knocked on that friends door and the friend said go away, he said no I just keep on knocking. The Bible says, Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. And that word actually means keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking, keep on, keep on, keep on just keep on praying.

You say, but wait a minute. Wait a minute. Doesn't there ever come a time when I stop praying? Yes, Yes. Number one, when you get the answer, you have the answer in your hand, you begin to praise. Maybe you don't have the answer in your hand. Maybe

you have the answer in your heart, God says it's done and the burden is gone. And you say, all right, Lord, thank you, I don't have it in my hand, but I have it in my heart, thank you, I praise you. Just begin to praise then. Or maybe, God may say to you as He said to Paul. Paul asked God three times to take the thorn from his flesh, God said Paul, I'm not gonna do it. But I'm gonna give you something better. I'm going to give you my grace.

My dear friend, you just keep on praying until you have the answer in your hand, in your heart, or God shows you a better way, but men ought always to pray.

Lets bow in prayer. Would you pray as the disciples prayed, "Lord teach us to pray"? Our greatest need as a church and as individuals is truly to know how to pray. Father, I pray in the name of Jesus, that you would teach us to pray. Amen.

# When Prayer Seems Unanswered

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 2, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 1:5–17

*“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”*

LUKE 1:13

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## Introduction

Turn with me tonight for our Bible study to Luke chapter 1. And as we study tonight, we're going to talk about this question: “When Prayer Seems Unanswered.” I think all of us could say there are times when we have prayed, and we have prayed our hearts out, and it seems like our prayers go unanswered. Well, we're going to try to look into that tonight and see if we can get some answers to why answers don't come or they seem not to come.

### I. The Problem of Unoffered Prayer

Now there's a problem even greater than unanswered prayer—and that is unoffered prayer. People don't even pray. Let me read these words to you:

*I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day;  
I had so much to accomplish, I didn't have time to pray.*

Anybody ever been there? Lift your hand. Be honest. Okay: “I had so much to accomplish, I didn’t have time to pray.”

*Problems just tumbled about me and grew heavier with each task;  
Why doesn't God help me, I wondered: He answered, "You didn't ask."  
I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, gray and bleak;  
I wondered why God didn't show me—He said, "But you didn't seek."  
I tried to come into God's presence: I used all my keys at the lock;  
God gently and lovingly chided, "My child, you didn't knock."  
I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day;  
I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray.*

—GRACE L. NAESSENS

Oh, if we could only learn the truth of that: we’re not wasting time, if we’re chopping wood, when we sharpen the axe!

## **II. The Problem of Unanswered Prayer**

There is the problem of unoffered prayer. And then, there is the problem of unanswered prayer. Why sometimes do we pray and prayers are not answered? Let’s look in Luke chapter 1 and begin, if we might, in verse 5. It’s a familiar story. Actually, it’s around Christmastime that we frequently look at this passage of Scripture: *“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they were both now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he...”*—that is, Zacharias—*“while he executed the priest’s office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest’s office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard;”*—and may I say right here that this phrase, *“thy prayer is heard,”* may adequately, and I think accurately, be translated, *“thy prayer was heard”*—*“and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of*

*the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God. And he shall go before him"—that is, John the Baptist—"in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."* (Luke 1:5–17)

Now we know there is unoffered prayer. But why sometimes is there unanswered prayer? Now verse 13 says to Zacharias that his prayer was heard. Why do we pray sometimes and our prayers are not heard?

#### **A. Sometimes the Answer to Prayer Is Simply Denied**

Well, first of all, the answer to the prayer sometimes is just simply denied. God does not answer prayer. Not all prayer is heard. It's obvious, when you look at this passage of Scripture, that Zacharias and Elisabeth were righteous people. They were on praying ground. Look in verse 6—it's talking about the man and his wife: *"And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."* (Luke 1:6) They were on praying ground. Many times we pray, and the answer does not come, because we are not walking before the Lord, we're walking in unrighteousness, and our sin keeps God from answering our prayer. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out.

Put in your margin James chapter 4, verses 1 through 4. James says, *"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not."* Now that's a problem of unasked prayer. But now, watch this. What about unanswered prayer? *"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss,"*—that is, wrongly—*"that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity"*—that literally means warfare—*"with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* (James 4:1–4) Plain English: God is not going to answer prayer for His enemies. And if we're worldly, if our prayers are not in the will of God, God is not going to answer the prayer.

Prayer is not some exercise where we get earth's will done in heaven, but heaven's will is to be done on earth. Many prayers are selfish. And he uses an illustration of friendship with the world as being like keeping company with an unclean harlot. What man would subsidize his wife if she had a boyfriend that she went away with, wrote home for more money so they could have a big time in Las Vegas, or in New Orleans, or wherever it might be, "Send help; send money." Of course, he'd be foolish to do that!

Why should God underwrite our worldliness? Why should God underwrite our

wickedness, our friendship with the world, which is spiritual adultery? So if I pray, and my prayers are not answered, I have to ask, are my motives pure? Why would God give me more strength to serve the devil? Again, *prayer is not bending God's will to fit my will; it is finding the will of God and getting in on it.* So there's the problem, yes, of unasked prayer. There is certainly unanswered prayer when God just simply says, "No, your heart is not right. Your motives are not pure and clean. I will not give you something that is outside of my will."

Listen to 1 John 5, verses 14 and 15: *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."* (1 John 5:14–15) Now prayer outside the will of God is not going to be answered, plain and simple. Selfish prayer, something that we consume upon our own lusts, God is not going to answer the prayer. God will meet my personal needs, but God is not going to meet my selfish needs.

### **B. Sometimes the Answer to Prayer Is Strategically Delayed**

But now, let's come back. Why sometimes, when we are like Elisabeth and Zacharias—we're walking with the Lord, keeping His commandments, praying for something that is His will—does the prayer not seem at times to be answered? Well, prayer is sometimes not simply denied; it is strategically—underscore strategically—delayed.

Now, look again in verse 13 of this passage, and here's what the angel says to Zacharias: *"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer..."*—now, remember it may be translated—*"thy prayer [was] heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."* (Luke 1:13)

Now evidently, Zacharias had prayed and prayed and prayed, and he'd even stopped praying. As a matter of fact, you're going to find that he had given up all hope. Look in verse 18: *"And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife is well stricken in years."* (Luke 1:18) Now God says through the angel, "Zacharias, your prayer was heard." He said, "How can it be? I'm an old man now. My wife is well stricken in age. There is no way that this is going to happen. The time of childbearing is past." Look back at verse 7: *"And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years."* (Luke 1:7)

And so the point is this: God had heard and granted the answer to their prayer many, many years ago. God heard the prayer, but God delayed the answer. And as I worked on this message, I found many places in the Bible where God hears prayer, but He delays the answer, and He does it strategically.

Put this verse in your margin—Daniel chapter 10, beginning in verse 12. Daniel is praying, and an angel comes to Daniel: *"Then said he unto me,"*—Daniel is speaking of

the angel—*“Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words”*—or, “because you have been praying.” *“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.”* (Daniel 10:12–13)

Now, folks, I’m going to tell you this is a deep passage right here about the prince of Persia, which was a demon spirit wrestling with an angel of Jehovah and delaying the answer to prayer. There is a lot there that your pastor doesn’t understand. Maybe you need to get another pastor. But I want to tell you this much. The point is clear and plain that Daniel’s prayer was heard but it was delayed. You can get that much, whether or not you get anything else. It was a prayer that was heard, but it was a prayer that was delayed.

Now the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 30, verse 18, *“Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he will be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are they that wait for him.”* (Isaiah 30:18) When God waits, you wait.

And God just simply delayed with Zacharias. God delayed with Daniel. God delayed with Mary and Martha. Lazarus got sick, and Mary and Martha asked Jesus to come and to heal Lazarus. And Jesus, the Bible says, deliberately delayed. He waited until Lazarus was in the grave dead and decaying before He came. (John 11:1–15) Now He had a purpose for that. He had a purpose for that, just as He had a purpose with Elisabeth and Zacharias. With Elisabeth and Zacharias, He waited until it was humanly impossible, and then did it. With Lazarus, He waited till Lazarus was dead and decaying, and then He raised Lazarus. (John 11:16–44)

### **1. God Delays to Display His Glory**

So, let me tell you one reason I believe that prayer is strategically delayed: to display the glory of God. God waited. God gave Abraham a promise and Sarah a promise that they were to have a son, and yet God did not fulfill that promise when they were young, vigorous, virile, and potent, but God waited till Abraham was a hundred and Sarah was ninety, and then God gave the answer to prayer. And when it came, it was obvious it was a miracle. Look in Genesis chapter 17 and verse 17: *“Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?”* (Genesis 17:17)

See, God is waiting with Zacharias until humanly it’s impossible. God is waiting with Abraham till it’s humanly impossible. God is waiting with Lazarus until it is humanly impossible. Let’s just go to the Lazarus passage and look, if you will, there in John chapter 11 and see that it’s so clear that He is waiting for a purpose. In John chapter 11,

let's read the first six verses there of that eleventh chapter: *"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick). Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death,"*—now here's the key—*"but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was."* (John 11:1–6)

Now, see those things juxtaposed: He loved them, and yet He delayed. If God doesn't answer your prayer immediately, it doesn't mean that God doesn't love you. It doesn't mean that God doesn't have a plan for you. There was a purposeful delay. There was a postponement. Now Mary pouts, and Martha rebukes Him, and they're waiting on Jesus. Lazarus is getting weaker and weaker and weaker. "Where is Jesus? Where is Jesus? Where is Jesus? Why doesn't He come?" Jesus just stays away. They're probably thinking, "Is Jesus ignorant? Doesn't He know that Lazarus is sick?" or "Is Jesus indifferent? Doesn't He care?" or, "Is Jesus impotent? Does He have no power?"

Well, look in John 11 and verse 4: *"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death,"*—now here's the key—*"but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."* (John 11:4) And then, look down in verse 40: *"Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"* (John 11:40)

Now here's the cardinal rule. All prayer is for the glory of God. And God always answers prayer in a way that brings to Him the greatest glory. Later on He says in this Gospel of John, in John chapter 14, verse 13, *"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do,"*—now, watch it—*"that the Father may be glorified in the Son."* (John 14:13)

Why does God answer prayer? For His glory. Why did Jesus delay to raise Lazarus from the dead? He says very clearly, "This sickness is for the glory of God." Now Jesus, obviously, could have come and healed him and gotten some miniscule glory, but He waited to get the greater glory.

## **2. God Delays to Dispense His Grace**

God delays, number one, to display His glory; number two, to dispense His grace. Remember the scripture over there in Isaiah chapter 30, verse 18: *"Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you."* (Isaiah 30:18) You see, the greater blessing was the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The greater blessing was to wait and give Zacharias and Elisabeth a son in their old age, because God had a plan. God's

plan was to send Jesus Christ to this earth. For four thousand years the Messiah had been prophesied, and the time was ripe. The Bible says that Jesus Christ was going to come in the fullness of time. He needed a forerunner. He needed someone to go before Him, before the Messiah. God chose John the Baptist.

Now, suppose God had given them John the Baptist when they first asked. John the Baptist would have been out of sync. He could never have been the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. They would have missed the blessing. They had had a baby boy. It may have been an answer to prayer, but he would just have been another baby boy. But now Jesus said of him, “There is not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:11) What I’m trying to say is that God delays, but delays are not denials. Sometimes prayer is simply denied because we’re asking wrongly. But sometimes it is strategically delayed.

### **C. Sometimes the Answer to Prayer Is Significantly Different**

Now, not only is it strategically delayed, but sometimes the answer may be significantly different. Go back to our text again in Luke chapter 1, if you will, and let’s look in verses 13 through 17: *“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God. And he shall go before him”—before the Messiah—“in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”* (Luke 1:13–17)

Now God gave them John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Lord, and He waited until the last to do it. God often saves the best till the last. Psalm 34, verse 10: *“The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.”* (Psalm 34:10) And then, Psalm 84, verse 11: *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* (Psalm 84:11) Now, listen to me. If God will withhold no good thing, why would you want anything else? If God doesn’t give you exactly what you asked, He’s not withholding a good thing: *“No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”*

Billy Graham’s wife, Ruth, is a very gracious lady it has been my privilege to know. She said on one occasion, “I thank God that He hasn’t given me everything I asked. If He had, I would have married the wrong man on four different occasions.” But, you see, *“no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”*

I had a need, a deep need. I was desperate, praying to the Lord. You've heard me say before, I even shouted at the Lord, argued with the Lord, reasoned with the Lord, begged the Lord, pled, stained heaven with my prayers; but God said to me one time, "Adrian, you're asking me to do something I'm not going to do. But I've heard your prayer." And my prayer was, number one, strategically delayed, and it was significantly different—but what an answer to prayer!

Now we don't always know what to pray for as we ought. John and Elisabeth thought they wanted a baby boy when they were young, and they begged God for a baby boy, and they never got a baby boy, not when they were young. God gave them not what they asked for, God gave them something better than they asked for; not just another boy, the greatest man on the face of the earth born of woman, according to Jesus Christ, apart from Jesus Christ Himself.

If you go down the streets and you see these big old metal boxes hanging on the poles, they're transformers. And the high voltage comes into those transformers, and then it drops down off that transformer into your house, into your toaster, your waffle iron, your coffee maker, and your dishwasher. Now if that power were to come without going through that transformer into your house, it wouldn't only toast your toast; it would toast your toaster.

So God sometimes takes our prayer power, and He takes our prayer power and He puts it into a great transformer called the Holy Ghost. And we ask one thing, and we don't know what to ask for, but we're sincere. The Bible makes it plain that John and Elisabeth were so sincere, but they didn't know what to ask for. They thought they knew. But the Holy Spirit said to the Father, "Now, Father, here's what John and Elisabeth are asking. But that isn't what they need. Here's what they need. So, Father, hear their prayer." Here's the scripture that deals with that—Romans 8, verse 26: *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit [Himself] maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* (Romans 8:26)

Sometimes before I go out of my study, I'll have a guest in there, maybe visiting before a service, and I'll say to the guest, "Would you lead us in prayer?" And they'll say, "And bless the pastor this morning; bless Pastor Rogers as he preaches this morning." I just bow my head, smile, nod, and say *amen*. But I'm not going to preach that morning. There's going to be another preacher, a guest speaker. They don't know that. Well, do you think that was a waste of prayer? It wasn't a waste of prayer. The Holy Spirit knew what that person had in his or her heart. And so the Holy Spirit says, "Now, Father, that man thinks Adrian is going to preach this morning, but Adrian's not going to preach;"—Gray Allison or somebody else, Mike Spradlin or somebody like that is going to preach; Stephen Olford is going to preach—"so, God, bless Mike; bless

Gray; bless Stephen.” You see, God takes our prayers, our prayer energy. Our hearts may be pure and clean, but our prayer sometimes is strategically delayed, and sometimes it is significantly different. And so, don’t give up.

Old Zacharias had almost given up. He had asked God for something. God heard his prayer. And he didn’t even know God had heard his prayer. He was shocked when God heard his prayer. One of my staff members was talking with me yesterday. We had a great prayer burden in the staff about something. And we prayed, and a staff member said, “Boy, God answers prayer, doesn’t He?” We had a wonderful answer to prayer.

### **III. What Do You Do When You Pray and the Answer Doesn’t Seem to Come?**

All right now, what do you do when you pray and the answer doesn’t seem to come? Well, let me give you some c’s.

#### **A. Check Up**

First of all, just check up. “Is my heart right with God? Is this for your glory, Lord? Is there any unconfessed, unrepented—of sin in my heart?” Well then, deal with it.

#### **B. Continue**

All right, suppose you check up and you say, “So far as I know, there is no unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my heart and in my life.” Then you keep on praying. The next c is continue. You continue to pray until you have the answer to your prayer either in your hand or in your heart. Now the Bible teaches that we’re to continue to pray. Luke 18:1: “*And he*”—Jesus—“*spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*” (Luke 18:1) The word *faint* means to “give up.” Don’t give up. Just keep on praying. And He told the parable of this widow who just kept on asking this judge to rectify her needs.

Now again, let me give you another scripture that just teaches we should continue—Matthew 7, verses 7 through 11: “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*” (Matthew 7:7–11) Now the Scripture says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you’ll find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” It literally says—and I don’t want to get too technical—but the Greek is “keep on asking; keep on seeking; keep on knocking.” Do not stop praying.

### C. Conform

Check. If there's no unconfessed sin, continue. Well, suppose the answer doesn't come and you don't have the answer in your hand. Well, do you have the answer in your heart? Remember what I told you about the prayer that I had with the Lord when I wrestled with the Lord, and the Lord said to me, "I have heard your prayer"? I had the answer in my heart. I did not see the answer. It took me maybe a year to see the answer. But I had the answer in my heart, and I had perfect peace in my heart about it. Colossians 3, verse 15 says, *"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."* (Colossians 3:15)

Now, suppose you don't get the answer in your hand, and you don't get the answer in your heart? Check. Continue. Number three: Just conform. Just say, "All right, Lord, maybe what I'm asking for is not your will. Maybe you have something better. I want your will. Not my will, but yours."

Well, let me give you the passage of Scripture here and we'll be finished—2 Corinthians 12, verses 7 through 10. Paul has a thorn in the flesh, and he's asking God to remove it. And the Bible says, *"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."* Paul had such a glorious vision that God had to somehow humble him lest he be super-exalted because of the revelations that God had given him. *"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me."* Now that doesn't mean he said, "Take it away! Take it away! Take it away!" That means for three extended periods of agonizing prayer he came to the Lord and asked God to take it from him. *"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..."*—now Paul didn't say what can't be cured must be endured; he said—*"he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."* (2 Corinthians 12:7–9)

If you come to the realization, for whatever reason, that God has another plan, you just conform to it. You just say, "Lord, I glory in it"—*"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."* (Job 13:15)

### Conclusion

So sometimes prayer is sinfully neglected. Sometimes prayer is simply denied, because we're asking wrongly. Sometimes prayer is strategically delayed. Sometimes prayer is significantly different. But God is a God that answers prayer. And if you have a need, you go to God and you pray and you pray, and you keep on praying until God gives you what you ask, or God lovingly says, "No, you're asking for the wrong thing," and you just

conform to the will of God.

# A Christmas Tribute to the Trinity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 27, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 1:35

*“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”*

LUKE 1:35

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sublime Mystery of the Trinity
- II. The Sacred History of the Trinity
- III. The Saving Ministry of the Trinity

Conclusion

## Introduction

And let me tell you that the great question of the ages is, who is this baby that Luke tells about in the birth of the child? Answer that question right and act on your answer, and all will be right. Answer that question wrongly and all will be wrong. I want to read to you just one verse and that is Luke chapter 1 and verse 35. The angel is speaking to Mary, the virgin Mary, and here's what the angel said to Mary, the angel Gabriel, "And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," underscore the word Holy Ghost, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee," underscore the Highest, "therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," underscore the Son of God. The Holy Ghost, the Highest, the Son of God. Who was this child? Who is Jesus?

Now some say, well, He was a great man. H. G. Wells, in his *Outline of History*, the great historian, gave a list of the ten greatest men who have ever lived, and number one on his list was Jesus Christ, but He doesn't belong on anybody's list. He is not Jesus Christ the Great, He's Jesus Christ the Only. You speak of Peter the Great, Charlemagne the Great, Alexander the Great, but you have to say Jesus the One and Only. Not a great man. Well, you might say He was a moral teacher. Well if that's all you say, you're wrong again.

C. S. Lewis said this, and I love this quote, so listen to it carefully, I'm going to read—it is great. C. S. Lewis, a brilliant mind, said this: I am trying here to prevent

anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him—that is about Jesus. And here's what they say. I am ready to accept Jesus Christ as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God. Then C. S. Lewis says, That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man who said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be either a lunatic on the level of the man who says he's a poached egg, or else He would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up as a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let none of us come with any patronizing nonsense about Him being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. Isn't that a great quote?

That is one—some say He's a great man, others say He's a moral teacher, others say that He is a prophet and a messenger of God. The Koran of Islam teaches, and I quote, Jesus was only a messenger of Allah. Or, some of the New Agers say that He is a mystic medium. They say, the New Age gurus see Jesus as a channel through which they can discover the inner god in them, and, all of the mysteries of the past, the present, and the future. Did you know there are demon spirits who take the name Jesus?

Who is this baby? He is God in the flesh. Not only is the Son of God, He is God the Son. You say, Well, how can that be? How can God be manifest in the flesh? Well, we come to a wonderful doctrine that I want to talk with you about today and it is the doctrine of the Trinity—the Trinity. Now don't think that we're just thinking about theological, sophistries. Don't think that we're talking about incidentals.

Friend, I want to tell you, the great battle in the world today is over this doctrine that we're going to talk about now, and that is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—that we worship one God in three Persons. You saw that there in the Christmas story. The Holy Ghost shall overshadow thee...that one that is born in thee...the power of the Highest will come upon thee...and that one will be called the Son of God. You have Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That is the Trinity. Now, you need to understand that we worship one God in three Persons and that is an absolute Christian distinctive.

And you would be amazed at how much error and how much, heresy comes because we don't understand that. For example, I mentioned Islam. Islam does not accept the doctrine of the Trinity. They do not accept the fact that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. You take, for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept the fact that Jesus was God in the flesh; they deny the idea of the Holy Trinity. The Unitarians do not accept the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and many false cults deny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. And for many of our beloved Jewish friends, they cannot understand the doctrine of the Holy Trinity—they think that perhaps we are polytheists, that we worship

three gods. We do not worship three gods; we worship one God who has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now I want to make it very clear that Jesus is God. When you get home, get John chapter 8 and read it. As I sat down in my study last night and read the entire chapter all the way through, it is an incredible chapter. Jesus is having an encounter with the Pharisees and the religious leaders of His day and they sneer at Him. They did not believe in the virgin birth, and in this dialogue between Jesus and these, they sneer at Him and they say, We be not born of fornication. They were implying that Jesus was born out of wedlock. Then they said, We have Abraham for our father. "And Jesus said to them," in John 8, verse 58, "before Abraham was, I am." Not I was—listen carefully: "Before Abraham was, I am." They took up stones to stone Him. Do you know why? Because over there in Exodus chapter 3, verse 14, when Moses said to God, Who shall I say sent me? Who are you? And, Elohim said, I am that I am. You go tell Moses I am sent you—not I was, not I will be, just I am, I always was, I always will be, I am the Great I am. They said, How do you know Abraham? You're not yet fifty years old? He said, Before Abraham was, I am. Indisputable. He is the great God.

But not only is Jesus God, the Holy Ghost is God. You read over there in Acts chapter 5, where Ananias and Sapphira told a lie about some money they'd given to the church, and Peter said, Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? You've not lied unto men; you've lied unto God. You lie to the Holy Ghost, you lie to God, because the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God. We don't worship three gods; we worship one God. But that one God has revealed himself as three persons. Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Now, three things I want to lay on your heart today, okay? See if you can remember them. We're going to think about the sublime mystery of the Trinity. We're going to talk about the sacred history of the Trinity. And then we're going to talk about the saving ministry of the Trinity. Can you remember that?

## **I. The Sublime Mystery of the Trinity**

Think with me a little bit about the sublime mystery of the Trinity. You see, First Timothy chapter 3, verse 16, says, "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh." Now that's a mystery—that is a mystery. How are you going to know about the Trinity? Only by divine revelation. There's no way that you're going to figure it out by human investigation. There's no way you're going to come about it by logic. There's no way by philosophy, or science or mathematics you're going to figure out the Holy Trinity—"And without controversy, great is the mystery, the mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh." You aren't going to figure it out.

Wesley asked this question—John Wesley: Could a worm understand a man? If a

worm could understand a man, then maybe you could understand the Trinity. Now, the Trinity is not, contradictory to logic and reason, it's just simply beyond it. There are certain things about God that will never be unfolded to your, your logic. You say, Well, you know, the idea of the Trinity is illogical. Friend, there are a lot of things about God that are illogical, not just the Trinity. God never had a beginning. What does that do to your logic? God is everywhere! The ancients used to say, God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. You say, I don't understand it. Frankly, I'm glad you don't. I wouldn't have any confidence in a God that you could understand or a God that I could understand. He is beyond logic, He is beyond comparison—it is a mystery, don't try to figure it out. You say, Well, I have questions about the Trinity. Friend, a five-year-old child can ask questions that nobody can answer. You see, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity does not depend upon your logic, upon your reason; it depends upon divine revelation. People race their theological engines trying to find some comparison to compare God to explain the Trinity. Put this verse down, Isaiah chapter 40, verse 18: "With whom, then, will ye liken God? Or with what likeness will you compare him?" What are you going to compare God to? You can compare one man to another man, one chair to another chair, one piano to another piano, one carpet to another carpet, one building to another building, one bug to another bug. There's only one God. You're not going to compare Him to anything. Don't say, God is like this or God is like that. Oh, you can see reflections of the Trinity everywhere because God made everything. God made space; space is height, width, and depth. Height is not width, width is not depth, depth is not height, all are part of the same, they cannot be separated, they can be distinguished. God made space, God made time. Time is past, present, and future. The past is not the present, the present's not the future, the future is not the past, all are time, each are distinguishable, all are inseparable. Man is body, soul, and spirit. "I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." You are triune in nature—you're sitting there, not three persons, but one person—body, soul, and spirit. But all of these analogies fail, they're only faint reflections of who God is.

Don't fall into the trap of modalism. What is modalism? Somebody says, Well, I can explain the Trinity. It's like Adrian Rogers—he is pastor, he is husband, and he is father. No, that's just the different modes. I'm just one person. That is, that is a heresy. There are three distinct persons in the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—not God acting in three different ways. There's the personality of the Father, the personality of the Son, the personality of the Spirit, but these three are one. We do not worship three gods, one God, who has revealed himself in three persons. Now the only way you're going to know that, dear friend, is to take the Bible and to open the Bible.

Now, we said that the Moslems do not accept the Trinity. We say our Jewish friends

do not accept the Trinity. And we say, for example, that Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept the Trinity. But let me tell you something—they all say they believe the Old Testament, so let's take the Old Testament, not the New Testament, the Old Testament, and let's look in the Old Testament and see what we find in the Old Testament. For example, let's look at, let's just open the Bible, on the front door, the front page, the first verse, and you'll find the holy Trinity. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." And the Hebrew word God is Elohim, and that is plural. Elohim, the im ending is the plural. A cherub is a single angel, a cherubim, im means many. A seraph, that's one angel, seraphim, that's many. Elohim is plural. But it says there, there is a plural noun but a singular verb. "In the beginning, Gods," and it may be translated that way, a plurality, "created the heavens and the earth," a singular verb, the same as seen when, when, the Almighty created man in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26, "And God said, Let us make man in our image." Now you think He'd say, Let me make man in my image. But "let us make man in our image." Elohim said, "Let us make man in our image." Now that's the triune God taking counsel together.

The Trinity of God is shown in the great commandment that God gave to the Jews. Now, the Jews took the name Jehovah, I am, Yahweh, as the most sacred name. We've already told you that. Some ultra-orthodox would not even repeat that name, they would not even write it, they would not even spell it. When a copier would come to copy that name, he'd put down his pen, get a new pen just to copy that name. That's the name Yahweh, or Jehovah. Now, here's what Deuteronomy chapter 6 says in verses 4 and 5. This is a verse that every orthodox would want to repeat morning and evening; he would learn this from a child. It's called shammah. It's a great verse, it speaks of the unity of God, that there's one God, and what a great verse it is. Listen to it. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." The Yahweh, the Jehovah, our Elohim, is one Jehovah. "The Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might." And our Jewish friends use this as a prime text for the unity of God, and well they might. But let me tell you, it also speaks of the Trinity, because when the Bible says, The Lord our Elohim, our Gods, is one Lord, that's very interesting. And the one echad, e-c-h-a-d, is one—it doesn't mean a singular one, it means a compound one. You say, What do you mean by that? Well, for example, in Genesis chapter 2, verse 24, "they two shall be one flesh," speaking of husband and wife, that's a compound unity. In Genesis 11, verse 6, when God looked down at the tower of Babel, He said, "Behold, they are one people," talking about a group of people. In Hebrews 13, verse 23, the Bible speaks of "one cluster" of grapes, a bunch of grapes. First Samuel 13, verse 17, an army, "one company." First Chronicles 17, verse 21, "one nation." I've just given you these to show you that the word one is a compound

one.

Now, what this is, the Lord our God is a unity—one unity. The Lord, our Gods. We're talking now Old Testament. You see, the Old Testament teaches that the great Eternal God has a Son. I'm not talking about the New Testament; I'm talking about the Old Testament. Put this verse down, Daniel chapter 3, verse 25, those three Hebrew children were thrown into the fiery furnace, I love that story. You knew it since a child, and the old king looked in there and this is what he said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." The Lord Jesus stepped out of heaven and took a stroll through the furnace with these boys. Proverbs chapter 30 and verse 4: "Who hath ascended up into heaven or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fist? Who hath bound the waters in the garden? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" I can, it's Jesus. Psalm chapter 2, verses 6 and 7. God is talking about the wicked machinations of the kings of this earth who don't want the Lord and His Christ, and yet He says in verse 6, "Yea have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, the Lord has said unto me," this is Jesus speaking, "thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Friend, that's Old Testament, and God's going to send His Son the Lord Jesus upon His holy hill of Zion. You ever play checkers? You move a man to the king's row and you say, Crown Him? That's what God's going to do, friend, He's going to put His Son right there in king's row and say, You crown Him. I've set my king upon my holy hill of Zion and our choir sang today, and thank God they did, it moved my heart. Isaiah 9, verse 6, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Not a Son born, a Child born, a Son given. "And the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor," now listen to this—the Son, his name is called Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The Son is the mighty God and the Everlasting Father. And the Word, mighty God is El-gabor—you know what it literally means? God-man—God-man.

Now the, the cultist will say, Well, that's speaking only of mighty God, not Almighty God. Jesus is the mighty God, not Almighty God. I say how many Gods you want, friend? That's idolatry. There's only one God, He is the mighty God, and this same term mighty God is used in the very next chapter in Isaiah chapter 10, verse 21: "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God." It speaks unequivocally of Almighty God and in the next chapter, that baby is called the mighty God, where there can be no quibble about it. He's the Everlasting Father, the Father of eternities.

Now, you say, Pastor Rogers, you're talking about the mysteries of the Trinity. That's right, the mystery of it. You say, I don't understand it. That's right, "For God's ways are

not your ways, his thoughts are not your thoughts, as the heavens are high above the earth." How high is up? You tell me how high is up. You can't do it, can you? Well, friend, that's how far God is from your understanding, okay? Don't you put God in your little suitcase of a mind and slip off all the neckties that are sticking out. No, no. God is God. Somebody said, Define the Trinity, you lose your mind. Deny the Trinity, you'll lose your soul. That's the sublime mystery of the Trinity.

## **II. The Sacred History of the Trinity**

But think with me, not only about the sublime mystery of the Trinity, think about the sacred history of the Trinity. You can, while you cannot understand the Trinity, you can see the Trinity at work. For example, in the creation of the world. Remember that verse we gave you? Genesis 1:1—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We all agree to that. Well now turn to John 1 verses 1 through 3: "In the beginning was the Word," and what is a word, but an expression of an idea, the articulation of an idea, Jesus is the expression, an articulation of the unseen idea of God. And "in the beginning was the Word and the word was with God," now watch this, "with God and the word was God. The same was in the beginning of God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Genesis 1:1—God the Father. John 1:1 to 3—God the Son. Job 26, verse 13, by his Spirit he garnished the heavens." Well, now who did the creation, God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit? Yes, yes. You see the Trinity in creation.

You see the Trinity in the writing of this book, the Bible. Who wrote the Bible? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible. For example, 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." That's fine, God the Father. First Peter 1, verse 10, "Of which salvation prophets have inquired and searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what or by what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." Well, this says that it was the Spirit of Christ that wrote the Bible. But then in 2 Peter 1, verse 21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Who wrote the Bible—God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost? Yes! They all, one God in three Persons, inspired this book. And that's the reason I've taken this text, this Christmas text.

How, who brought the Savior into the world? We're talking about the conception of the Savior. Luke 1, verse 35: "And the angel said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee, therefore the holy thing that shall be born unto thee shall be called the Son of God." Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When the Lord Jesus commissioned the church, we had Dr. Jerry Rankin down here who knows this verse backward, forward, inside out, Matthew 28, verses 18

through 20: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you."

Now, it would be sheer blasphemy to put the name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit on the same level as God the Father if they were not one in three and three in one. You see, the holy Trinity, folks, you see the holy Trinity, not only in sublime mystery but in sacred history—in the creation of the world, in the composition of the Scriptures, in the conception of the Christ, in the commissioning of the church. The Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity.

### **III. The Saving Ministry of the Trinity**

But here's one last thing and we must wrap this up. I want you to see at this Christmas season, not only sublime mystery and not only sacred history, but I want you to see, thank God, the saving ministry of the Holy Spirit, of the Son, and of the Father. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Now, I've referenced a lot of scriptures and I've given you time to turn to them, so I want you to turn to this one. Turn to Ephesians chapter 1—would you do that? Let me hear the pages now if you have your Bibles with you. Those of you who have it memorized, don't bother. Paul writes here about our salvation. Matter of fact, some say this is the longest sentence in the Bible, this sentence. I'm not going to read the entire sentence, but it's like Paul gets started and he can't stop talking. And what Paul is going to do here in Ephesians 1, he's going to give you the history of salvation and he's going to talk about the Holy Trinity. And he just keeps talking and he keeps talking and he keeps talking. Kind of like that little poem I heard—once there was a poet from Japan whose poetry no one could scan, and, when told it was so, he said, yes, I know, but I always try to get as many words in the last line as I can. And, this is what Paul is doing—he just keeps on talking and talking about salvation.

Now, I want you to see—and, by the way, listen, folks. Don't think that I'm just, as I said in the beginning, I'm just talking about theological sophistries and niceties and incidentals. Hey, this deals with you; this deals with your destiny; this is how you got saved; this is why you're going to heaven; that's why we're in the church today. Now listen to it. What is the Trinity in saving ministry? Well begin in verse 3, for example. "Blessed be," this is Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who have blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him." Underscore hath chosen us in Him. "Before the foundation of the world," you talk about old-time religion, "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ himself according

to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.”

Now put this down about salvation. God thought it before you were ever born, was in the heart and mind of God. God sees you sitting in this church today; God knows the past, the present, and the future all together. And, friend, our God has chosen you, God has selected you to be His child. Look in verse 4, "He has chosen us in him." The only reason that we can choose Him is because He first chose us. And why did He choose us? For a miracle, "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Hey, folks, that's the gospel. He can take a no-good, low-down, scummy vile sinner like Adrian and make him holy and blameless. That's wonderful, that's salvation, and listen, having, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ." A man might in this Bible time have sired a child, but this child might be the offspring of a slave, so in order to make it legal, he has an adoption ceremony, where that child becomes an heir and a joint-heir with all of the children. Now, friend, we are predestinated unto this adoption, that is, we are not only spiritually but legally the children of Jesus Christ, "according to the good pleasure of his will." What does that mean? Well, and then, then, look in verse 6: "To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved." Get ready for a blessing. Friend, listen. We were chosen in the past, we are predestined for the future, and we are accepted in the present. Hey, now, listen. That was a good place for an amen and Bob grunted one out but they—I didn't hear you.

Listen—listen. This salvation comes from God the Father. God thought it. But watch this—Jesus bought it. Begin now in verse 6, "to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved," the beloved is Jesus, "in whom," the beloved, "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." God thought it in eternity past, Jesus bought it on the cross so long ago with His rich, red, royal blood. Jesus bought our salvation. We have forgiveness for sin. The word forgiveness actually means to bear away, to carry away. You go over there in the book of Leviticus, you'd find out that the high priest would one day take two goats and, take that goat and that goat would be slain and his blood would be presented at the altar and then the priest would take another goat, called the scapegoat, lay his hands on the head of that goat and confess the sins of the people upon that goat's head, and then that goat would be led out into the wilderness, never to return again. Talking about our Lord through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, our sins being borne away, taken away, as far as the east is from the west, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

What is our salvation, what is the saving ministry of the Holy Trinity? God the Father thought it, God the Son bought it, and God the Spirit wrought it. I want you to notice also verse 13, "This same thing in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of

truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” You know what a seal means in Bible times? It means a finished transaction, it means ownership, and it means protection. That's what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what we have in God the Father, that's what we have through the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

Now, what's he saying? He's saying, listen, the Holy Trinity, that's the saving ministry of the Trinity. That's why Jesus split the heavens, came to this earth, was born of a virgin, lain in straw. Why? It's the saving ministry of the Holy Trinity. God thought it, Jesus bought it, the Holy Spirit wrought it. You're selected by the Father, saved by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit. That's good, isn't it?—even if I said it, that's good, that's good. That's the ministry of the blessed Trinity. You see the blessed Trinity on Christmas, when that little baby was born, the Holy Ghost overshadowed Mary. The little baby, the Son of God, was the Son of the Highest. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Aren't you glad for Christmas? Aren't you glad that the holy Trinity brought us to this wonderful place that we might be saved. You know, Jim, I hadn't planned to do this, but you think that we just might sing the Doxology? Do we have a pianist, an organist, anybody here who knows the Doxology? Let's stand and sing Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow.

(Singing) Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above the heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Remain standing; bow your heads in prayer. Lord God, hmmm, we praise you for the mystery of the manger, for the blessing of Bethlehem, for the treasures of the Trinity. We praise you. Lord, we pray that people today, men, women, boys, and girls, will give their hearts to this dear Savior.

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this? O God—just pray it. God, I'm a sinner, my sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. Thank you, Jesus, that you paid for my sin with your blood on the cross. I believe you're the Son of God. I believe that God raised you from the dead, and right now, by faith, I receive you into my life as my Lord and Savior, to love you and follow you the rest of my life. Come into my heart, save me, Jesus. Pray it. Come into my heart and save me, Jesus. And then pray this. Lord Jesus, because you died for me, I will live for you. And help me never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray, Amen.

Now look up here. Pastor Rogers, if I prayed that prayer, did Jesus Christ save me?

Well, it all depends on whether or not you were sincere. You say, Well, how can I know whether I'm sincere. I think you'll know, but one of the best ways I know is, are you willing to make it public? The Scripture says when we believe on Him we'll not be ashamed of Him. I'm going to ask a minister to stand at the head of each of these aisles. I'm going to ask a minister to stand in the corner of the balconies under that banner over there and this banner here. And if, this morning, you prayed that prayer with me, or you're willing to pray that prayer and you need a little more guidance, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. There's something about coming forward that glorifies the Lord Jesus, that settles it and seals it, that shames the devil and gives joy to the church and blessing to the believer. A minister will be here to welcome you. There'll be a minister at the head of each of these aisles. You say, Pastor, if I'm coming to trust Jesus, give my heart to Jesus, what would I say when I go down there? Just say, I'm trusting Jesus. We want to take some Scripture, give you some Scripture to stand on, answer some questions, and seal your decision in prayer.

Others of you, precious friends, need a church home. Lovingly, if you're saved, I invite you, if you believe in the message and ministry of this church, to come and say, I want to place my membership here, and we'll tell you how may become a member of this church. Now if you're in the balcony, just meet the minister over there in the corners of the balcony. You're on the ground floor, come forward right here. If you're with a friend that needs to make a decision, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus.

Now when we become to sing, don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You step out on the very first stanza and we're here waiting to receive you and, people, be praying for these who need Jesus today. You step out and come right now.

# Jesus Christ: The Son of God and God the Son

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 17, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 1:35

*“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”*

LUKE 1:35

## Outline

Introduction

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II. The Sacred History of the Trinity

III. The Saving Ministry of the Trinity

Conclusion

## Introduction

Find Luke chapter 1—Luke chapter 1. And, we’re talking today about the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is also God the Son. What we’re going to be talking to you about today is the Holy Trinity. Now, we’re familiar with Mary and her birth of Jesus Christ, and I want you to see that in the very scripture that describes His birth, the Holy Trinity is seen.

Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 1, and verse 35: “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee...” Now the angel is talking to Mary. “...The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee...” That’s the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost in the Holy Trinity. “...and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee...”

That is, God the Father. “...therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” There in that one verse you have Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That brings this question: Who was this baby? Who was Jesus Christ? There’s one right answer; there are many wrong answers.

Let me give you some of the wrong answers that may sound so good. For example, some say that Jesus Christ was a great man. H. G. Wells, the noted historian who wrote the Outlines of History, said this: As a matter of fact, he listed the ten greatest men of all history, and Jesus Christ was number one on his list. Jesus Christ doesn’t belong on

anybody's list. He's absolutely unique. You can talk of Peter the Great, Alexander the Great, Charlemagne the Great, but Jesus is Jesus, the One and Only. Others say, "Well, He was a great moral teacher." There's a brilliant Englishman, C. S. Lewis, who said this about those who simply want to call Jesus Christ a great moral teacher. I want you to listen to this and listen carefully. These are rich words.

Here's what C. S. Lewis said. "I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people say about Him, 'I'm ready to accept Jesus Christ as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.'" That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be either a lunatic, on the level of a man who says he's a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool. You can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon. Or, you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let none of us come away with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us." Did you hear what he said? I mean, listen. "Either He is a lunatic, or a demon, or He is God, but you cannot just simply call Him a great moral teacher."

Now, in Islam, He's called a prophet, a messenger of God. And the Koran of Islam teaches, and I quote, "Jesus was only a messenger of Allah." Oh, no. He is more than a messenger of Allah. Some say, "Well, He was..." The New Agers speak of Jesus as some mystic medium, some cosmic Christ, some channel that enables us to get in contact with inner space and outer space. And, there are demon spirits who call themselves Jesus, but not the Jesus of the Bible. Who is Jesus?

Now, the message this morning is going to cause you to think. I want you to make some notes. And look up here—don't you check me out. Don't you let your mind go Christmas shopping this morning. Don't you be thinking about anything else. I want your mind this morning, because what I'm talking to you about is so basic that if you miss it, you miss all of Christianity. Who is Jesus Christ?

Now, the doctrine of the Trinity, listen to me, is the great Christian distinctive. It is what makes our faith different from all of the other faiths. Islam does not believe in the Trinity. Unitarianism does not believe in the Trinity. Mormonism does not believe in the Trinity. The Jehovah's Witnesses, and others who will come to your doorstep, do not believe in the Trinity. The Jewish people, in general, do not believe in the Trinity. That's a stumbling block to them. But I'm going to show you in the Jewish Scriptures in the Old Testament when we get to it, what we call the Old Testament. They don't call it the Old Testament. It's their Bible. They don't think that there's something new and better that's come along. But I'm going to show you, in what we call the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, that Jesus is God. And I'm going to show you from the Bible what the Bible

teaches about the Holy Trinity.

Now, let me just, before I ever get into the basic three points of the message, let me just remind you that Jehovah God is just that. He is God. But let me say also that Jesus Christ, Bethlehem's babe, was and is God, and He himself claimed to be. This is the reason that, C. S. Lewis said, "You just can't tip your hat to Him and call Him a great moral teacher."

Now, put in your margin, or put on your notes, if you're making notes, Exodus chapter 3 and verse 14. Moses is going to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and so he wants some credentials. And he says, "Now, look. I just can't go to Pharaoh and say, 'let my people go.' Who shall I say sent me?" And there in Exodus chapter 3, verse 14, Jehovah God speaks to Moses, and here's what the Scripture says: "And God said to Moses, I AM that I AM." That is, "You go tell Pharaoh that I AM sent you." This was His name. I AM that I AM. That's the most sacred name for God. What does He mean I AM that I AM? Not I was. Not I will be. Not that I had a beginning or I will ever have an ending. I AM the great I AM, the self-existent God. I AM that I AM, sacred name for deity in the Old Testament.

Now, when we come to the New Testament, in the New Testament in John chapter 8, the Pharisees were picking at Jesus and trying to discredit Jesus, wanting Jesus to give His credentials. They were boasting. They said, "We have Abraham for our father..." And what that was, was a sneer, saying, "We don't even know who your Father is." "We know that your marriage was not consummated when your child was born." It was a, an indication that Jesus was born out of wedlock. It was a sneer. "We have Abraham for our father..." Here's how Jesus answered them in John 8 and verse 56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily..." Now, whenever Jesus says verily, verily that means tune in. It means truly, truly, amen, amen, listen—listen. "...Verily, verily, I say unto you—now listen to this—Before Abraham was, I AM." Now, listen. Don't miss that. "...Before Abraham was, I AM." Not I got here before Abraham did. There never was a time when I was not. I AM the great God of Exodus chapter 3. I am the I AM. Do you know what they did after He said this? They picked up stones to stone Him because to them that was blasphemy. Jehovah God is God. Jesus Christ is God. And the Holy Spirit is God.

In the fifth chapter of Acts, there were two people in the church, Ananias and Sapphira, who pretended to make an offering to God that was fuller than they, that was less than they said it was. And, actually, they were playing church. They were lying in church. Peter, by divine revelation, knew Ananias and Sapphira were telling a lie, and this is what he says in Acts chapter 5, verse 3: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath

Satan filled thine heart—now watch this—to lie unto the Holy Ghost...” Now our Jehovah’s Witness friends tell us that the Holy Ghost is just some emanation from God the Father. Oh, no. He’s a person who can be lied to. He can be grieved. “...Ananias, why hath Satan filled your heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost...” Now listen to me very carefully now. Go on down to verse 4—Acts 5, verse 4. Listen to it. “...thou hast not lied unto me, but unto God.” The Holy Ghost is God. Jehovah God is God. Jesus, the Son, is God. And there is a Trinity. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Spirit is God.

Sometimes, when you ask people to say, “What do you mean by the Holy Trinity?” they say, “Well, there’s God the Father, and then there’s Jesus and the Holy Spirit,” or they might just say, “There’s God, then Jesus and the Holy Spirit.” No. There’s God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Now listen very carefully. We sing it Sunday mornings. You probably pay no attention to it. “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity.” Now we’re going to look in the Bible and we’re going to see the Trinity in both the Old and the New Testament. And then we’re going to come back and understand why we say that the Son of God is God the Son.

## **I. The Sublime Mystery of the Trinity**

First of all, point number one. I want you to see the sublime mystery of the Trinity, the sublime mystery. Underscore the word mystery. The only way that you can know about the Holy Trinity is by divine revelation. Did that sink in? If it did, say amen—only by divine revelation. You will never understand the Holy Trinity by human investigation, not by logic, not by philosophy, not by science, not by mathematics. The only way that you can know about the Holy Trinity is what God says in this book. And if God says it in the Bible you believe it because of divine revelation. Don’t get the idea that you discover the Holy Trinity.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, a great man of God, talked about this, and he said, “How can a worm understand a man, and how can a man understand God?” Now, when we say that there’s a divine Trinity, one God in three persons, some people say, “Well, that’s contradictory to logic. That sounds like you’re worshipping three Gods.” No. There are a lot of things that you don’t understand about the one God. Can you understand a God that never had a beginning? Can you think of anything else that never had a beginning? Can you think of a God that is everywhere at the same time? If you’ll think about it, those things are absolutely contradictory to logic, and less, and yet they are true. God never had a beginning and God is everywhere. That’s not logical, but it’s certainly true. You say, “Well, I have some questions about the Trinity.” Friend, a five-year-old child can ask questions about anything that no one can answer. It doesn’t matter that you can’t understand it. Do you understand infinity? Of course you don’t. Do

you understand eternity? Of course you don't. The doctrine of the Trinity rises or falls on divine revelation. Now, don't get in arguments about it, just accept what the Bible says. Now, there are some people who try to prove or disprove the Trinity with illustrations. You can't prove the, the Holy Trinity with illustrations. Why? Because there's only one God, and since there's only one God, there's nothing you can compare Him to. I can compare this pulpit to another pulpit. I can compare, that man to another man. I can compare this church to another church. But there's only one God. Put down this verse—Isaiah chapter 40, and verse 18: "To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him? You can't say God is like anything. God is not like anything. There is nothing that you can compare God with. Now, we see reflections of the Trinity in all that God has made. For example, everything that God has created is time and space. Time is past, present, and future. That's a trinity. The past is not the present; the present is not the future; and the future's not the past. All three are distinguishable, all three are inseparable, and you can't have one without the other. That's time. Space—height, width, and depth. Height is not width; width is not depth; depth is not height. All are distinguishable, but all are inseparable. They all exist together. You can't have one without the other. Man. Man is body, soul, and spirit. Sitting in your chair is body, soul, and spirit, yet you're one person. What we see are reflections of the Trinity but not illustrations of the Trinity. Friend, God says, "There's nothing, nothing that you can compare Me with." So don't come around here with saying, "Well, it doesn't make sense to me." Frankly, I'm glad it doesn't make sense with you, to you, or to me. We don't want a God that we can understand. Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts." It ought to give us comfort that we don't understand the Trinity. That means that God is bigger and greater than we are.

But, I said that Muslims accept, to some degree, the Old Testament. Jews accept the Old Testament. Jehovah's Witnesses and others say they accept the Old Testament. Let's just look in the Old Testament for a minute and see if God is reflected there.

For example, let's just open the Bible and we'll find the Holy Trinity on the fir, on the, on the portals of the Bible. The first chapter and the first verse you'll find the Holy Trinity. Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The, the word for God there is the Hebrew word Elohim. It ends with this, these letters—im, if we put it in English, Elohim. That's the plural ending. For example, one angel is a cherub; more than that are cherubim. Now, actually, literally, what you have is a plural subject with a singular verb. And, literally, it says, "In the beginning Elohim, Gods—plural—created—singular—the heaven and the earth."

You'll find the same thing in the creation of man. Put down Genesis chapter 1, verse 26: "And God, Elohim—plural—God. Literally you could translate, "...and Gods said, Let us—not let me, but let us—make man in our image..." God. Who is He speaking to? He's speaking with Himself. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is making man in His image.

You see the Trinity reflected in creation. You see the Trinity reflected in the great commandment. Did you know the Bible has a great commandment and the Bible has a great commission? The great commandment is found in the Old Testament. It's called the Sham for our Jewish friends. This is the key verse for our Jewish friends. They love it. It is used to open the Liturgy in orthodox synagogues. A good Jew would repeat this verse every morning, and well he ought—and well we ought. It is a beautiful verse. Listen to it. Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 and 5: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." That is a great verse, is it not? And so our Jews say, "We can't believe in three Gods." Of course you don't believe in three Gods. I don't believe in three Gods. I believe in one God. But now, listen to this verse and look at it carefully. Just get, because this is a prime proof text to the Jews as to the unity and oneness of God, and they correctly believe that. The word Lord, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our Lord, the Lord our God is one Lord..." The word Lord is the word Yahweh or Jehovah. So, but that's singular. Jehovah, singular, the Lord our Gods, our God. Remember that's Elohim, that's plural. The Lord our Gods is one God. Jehovah, singular; our Elohim, plural, is one Jehovah. Jehovah, singular, our Elohim, plural, is one Jehovah.

Now, I want you to think about the word one that's in this verse. If you're going to spell it, echad. E-C-H-A-D, echad. And what it literally means is one as a unit, one as a unit. I want to give you some verses. I'm going to give them to you quick so just write them down. Genesis chapter 2, verse 24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife; and they two shall be one flesh." Now there are two here but they're called one. Now look, if you will, in Genesis 11:6: "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one..." The people, plural. All of those people round about the Tower of Babel, He says, they are one. It's the same word that is used over here in the Book of Deuteronomy that says God is one. Now, in Numbers chapter 13, verse 23. In the middle of that verse, "...one cluster of grapes..." So here's a bunch of clustered grapes, many grapes, and the Bible calls them one. 1 Samuel 13, verse 17, talking about an army. And there in the middle of that verse it says, "...one company..." like a company of soldiers. Now, what it is, is a unit in plurality. First Chronicles 17, verse 21: "And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel..."—one nation. A whole nation is called one.

Now, let's go back to this verse of Scripture here in Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 4.

Listen to it. “Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our Gods is one Jehovah.” It’s the same word that means a plurality in a unity. Yes, there’s one God, but that one God is a triune God. It gives some people difficulty to believe that God has a Son, and they think that’s a New Testament concept. Friend, that’s an Old Testament concept as well. Put these verses down. Daniel chapter 3, verse 25. You remember the story of the three Hebrew children? I mentioned this a few weeks ago in the fiery furnace that would not burn, and the king looked into the furnace and here’s what he saw. Daniel 3, verse 25: “He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” That’s the Son of God in the Old Testament. Put this verse down, Proverbs chapter 30 and verse 4. The writer of Proverbs is asking a question. “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell? I can tell. His name is Jesus. Psalm 2—Psalm 2, put it down, verses 6 and 7. God is talking about the wicked imaginations of the world and how people are warring and fighting an, and rebelling against Him. And yet God says in Psalm 2, verses 6 and 7: “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree—Jesus is speaking now—the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” God the Son is speaking to God the Father and speaking of God the Father and saying, “The Lord has said unto me, Thou art my Son...” And then the classic Christmas verse. Listen to it carefully. Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor—are you ready for this now?—The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father...” What is this Son to be called? El Gibbor, the Mighty God. Literal translation, the God Man. He is El Gibbor, the God Man. That is His name. That is what He is called.

If you were to show this to a Jehovah’s Witness, do you know what he would say to you? “Oh, He is the mighty God, but He’s not Almighty God. He is a God, not the God.” Well, if that is true, then what you have is polytheism and idolatry if you’re worshipping any other gods other than the true God. But I want to show you that Jehovah Himself calls Himself the Mighty God. Just go forward in Isaiah to the next chapter, chapter 10. You’re in Isaiah 9. Go to chapter 10, verse 21: “The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.” There it’s speaking of Jehovah. Now, the Bible, in Isaiah chapter 9, calls Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Mighty God. And then, in Isaiah chapter 10, the very next chapter, it speaks of Almighty God as a Mighty God. Don’t let anybody flim-flam you and tell you that the one spoken of in Isaiah chapter 9:6 is any less than God Himself. That’s what it’s all about. Listen to that verse again. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be

upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God..." And also He's the Everlasting Father. And that verse, that word literally means the Father of Eternity. Well, you say, "Pastor Rogers, I don't understand the Trinity." Well, join the club.

A wise man said, "Try to explain the Trinity, you'll lose your mind; deny it, you may lose your soul." It is Bible doctrine. The only reason that we believe it is because the Bible teaches it. You say, "Well, I can't put any faith in something I can't understand." Then don't turn on the lights because you don't understand electricity. Oh, you say, "I understand electricity. I'm an electrician." Let me tell you something. Einstein said he didn't understand electricity. He said he hoped before he died he could understand electricity. He never did. I love what Vance Havner said. He said, "I don't understand it either, but I'm not going to sit in the dark until I do." No. Don't think that you have to define or explain God. The only way you know about the Holy Trinity is it is revealed in Scripture, and I've talked to you about the sacred mystery or the sublime mystery.

## **II. The Sacred History of the Trinity**

Secondly, I want to talk to you about the sacred history of the Trinity. Not only the mystery, but the history. You see, as you open the Bible, you see the Holy Trinity working in history, for example, in the creation of the world. I've already alluded to this. Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning Elohim created the heaven and the earth." Well, did God the Father create this world? Yes, but I want to tell you something else. God the Son also created this world. John 1, New Testament, verses 1 through 3: "In the beginning was the Word—the logos—and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Well, I thought all things were made by Jehovah God? You got it. All things were made by Jesus. There's no contradiction. Well, what about the Holy Spirit? Well, the Holy Spirit created everything. Look, if you will, in Job 26, verse 13: "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens..." God the Father made it, God the Son made it, God the Holy Spirit made it, because we worship one God who revealed Himself in creation.

How did the Bible come about? How did we get this book? From the Holy, from the Holy Trinity. The Bible is inspired by God the Father. Second Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." So this is a God book. All this book is God-breathed. But God the Son also wrote the Scripture. Read in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 10 and 11: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or by what manner the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify..." Who was in the prophets? The Spirit of Christ. Now, we just read that the God the Father. Now we're reading that God the

Spirit, God the, the Son, gave us the Bible. But also, the Bible was inspired by God the Holy Spirit. Second Peter 1, verse 21: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” In the creation you see the Trinity. In the giving of the Scripture you see, the Trinity. When Jesus Christ, before He left this earth and He commissioned the church, the commissioning of the church shows us the Holy Trinity. Listen to Matthew 28, verses 19 and 20: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them—watch this—in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Now remember that I told you that Jesus didn’t belong on anyone’s list? Do you think what a travesty this would be to put the name of Jesus on a list that begins with God the Father, or the put the Holy Spirit on that list, if they’re not co-equal and co-eternal? It would be blasphemy. “...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Now I must bring the message to a conclusion. I’ve talked to you about the, the mystery of the Trinity. Don’t try to figure it out. You know it by divine revelation. I’ve talked to you about the history of the Trinity. And I’ve just picked out a few ways where I could, I showed you the Holy Trinity working in creation. I’ve showed you the Holy Trinity working in the composition of the Bible. I’ve showed you the Holy Trinity, in the commissioning of the church.

### **III. The Saving Ministry of the Trinity**

Let me come to the final thing. Not only talked to you about, mystery, and history, but let me talk to you about the saving ministry—the saving ministry of the Holy Trinity. You see, it’s in the Holy Trinity that we have our salvation. Now I want you to turn, if you will, take your Bible and we’re going to slow down here just a little bit. But I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 1. And in Ephesians chapter 1, what we’re going to see is how we are saved through the Holy Trinity. Now look in Ephesians chapter 1, beginning in verse 3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he—God the Father—hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” Now this verse simply says we were selected by God the Father. You talk about old time religion. Friend, before God swung this planet into space, He had you in His heart and in His mind. You were chosen in the past, you’re predestinated by the future, and you are accepted and preserved in the present. That’s what this verse tells us. Thank God for that.

Now, listen. We’re talking about the Holy Trinity. You were selected by the Father.

That's Ephesians 1, verses 3 through 6. You also are saved by the Son. Look in Ephesians 1, verses 6 and 7. God did this "To the praise of the glory of his grace, whereas, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Who is the beloved? Jesus. "This is my beloved Son..." "In whom—in Jesus—we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." This is the why of Christmas. Jesus came to save us. We have redemption through Jesus. And the Bible says it's the riches of His grace. I'm not trying to sell your salvation today. I'm not offering you salvation at a discount. I'm not offering you salvation in the installment plan. It is the sheer gift of God's grace. You were selected by the Father, you are saved by the Son, and you are sealed by the Spirit. Now just go right on down to verses 13 and 14: "In whom—Jesus—ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest—that means the down payment of our inheritance—until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Sealed with the Spirit. What does it mean to be sealed? Well, in the Bible time, they would take melted wax, and then they would have a, a icon that would stamp that wax. It might be on an official document. It might be on a letter. It might be on a proclamation. But if it was a business transaction, that's what he's talking about here, it would mean the price is paid, the ownership is transferred, and, and, the matter is settled. Now that's, that's what happens when we get saved. We're selected by the Father, saved by the Son, sealed by the Spirit. Friend, I want to tell you, you are bought and sealed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father. That is the Holy Trinity working in your salvation. If you, if you don't believe in the Holy Trinity, forget it. You have no Christianity. The whole thing is gone. It is all bogus. Don't just try to magnify the little babe of Christ as the sweet little Jesus child, and Jesus is a great moral teacher, and all of that. Forget it! The Son of God is God the Son. That's the reason God the Father, in Hebrews chapter 1, said, "Thou art my son. This day have I begotten thee." You have to understand, friend, that, "...and unto the son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever."

## Conclusion

Now, let me come to the conclusion of this whole thing. What do you do? Do you simply believe this? That's not enough. Boys and girls, I want to ask you a question: There were three frogs on a log. Two of them decided to jump off. How many are left? Anybody think you know the answer? Ha, there are three left. There are three frogs on a log, no matter what they decide. They're still there until they jump. Now, look. You can decide anything. You got to do something about this thing. It's not just simply accepting some intellectual premise. You can believe in the Holy Trinity and go straight to hell.

You say, “Well, I decide that you’re right. I agree with you.” Have you given your heart to Jesus? You say, “Well, I know the plan of salvation.” You’re not saved by the plan of salvation, you’re saved by the man of salvation. His name is Jesus.

There was, back in the 1800’s, there was a great acrobat. His name was Blondin. He was a tightrope walker. He actually walked more than a thousand feet across Niagara Falls without any safety net, hundreds of feet above the roaring falls. A fall would have been devastating. It would have been deadly. Blondin was so good. He had so much confidence that he walked across Niagara Falls on stilts. On another occasion, he put a stove on his back, went out there and sat in the middle on that wire, fired up the stove, cooked an omelet, and ate it out there on that wire, hundreds of feet above Niagara Falls with no net at all. On another time, he took his manager, put his manager on his shoulders, and walked across to the Canadian side. History. He put 350 pounds of cement in a wheelbarrow and took that across the falls. On that occasion, the people just roared. They applauded. There were some 20,000 who were watching. He said, “How many of you believe I could do this with a man in the wheelbarrow?” They all put up their hands. He pointed to one man who had his hand up, and said, “All right. You come, get in the wheelbarrow.” He couldn’t see him for dust. Gone!

It’s one thing to have an intellectual belief. It’s another thing to give your heart to Jesus Christ, to know that He is the very Son of God. Holy, holy, holy—holy is the Father, holy is the Son, holy is the Spirit. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity. That’s what Christmas is all about. Enough of this pablum about Jesus being a great man. He is God—very God, a very God. God, the mighty maker died, for man, the creature’s sin. Can you imagine God stepping out of glory, allowing Himself to be spit on, abused, beat, made, according to the flesh, weak? Deity in a diaper. God in a manger. No wonder the Bible says, “Great is the mystery of godliness.” God was manifest in the flesh.

That’s what it’s all about, folks, and I’m telling you today, you listen to me. We are not worthy of such love, but He died for us. And if you will, by faith, receive Him as your personal Lord and Savior, give your heart to Him, trust Him, He will forgive every sin, every one. He will cleanse you, as well as forgive you. The Holy Spirit of God will seal you to the day of redemption. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God. You say, “Well, now, pastor, what if I get saved and sin again?” Listen to me. Jesus is a Savior. He is not a probation officer. He will keep you all the way to the end. Now if you sin, and you will sin, He’ll carry you to the woodshed. “Whom the Father loves, He chastens.” That doesn’t mean you’ll lose your salvation. When you get saved, you’re not going to sprout wings and get a halo. You’re going to have to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. But He will keep you and His blood will continually cleanse you. If I could walk down this aisle for you today, acknowledging Christ as Savior on your behalf,

I would do it. I can't. I've soaked this message in prayer. I have preached as best I know how. Now listen to me, listen. God sent me here to tell you He loves you and He wants to save you. And if you want to be saved, Jesus, the Son of God, who is God the Son, with His own blood purchased your salvation.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want to lead you in a prayer. And I want you to pray this prayer after me if you want Jesus. Dear God, I need to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You right now as my personal Savior. This moment I give You my heart and my life forever. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, save me, Lord Jesus. Did you pray that? If you did, then I want you to pray, by faith, this way. Thank You for doing it. That settles it. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. I will live for You the rest of my life, for Your glory, and by Your grace. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# His Unquestioned Lordship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 22, 2002

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 2

*“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

LUKE 2:11

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Confession of Christ as Lord Secures Salvation

II. The Confession of Christ as Lord Simplifies Service

III. The Confession of Christ as Lord Subdues Satan

Conclusion

## Introduction

Find Luke chapter 2. It's the story of the birth of the baby of Bethlehem. Question: who is this child? The wrong answers are multitudinous, infinite. There is one right answer. Let's look in verse eleven.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” That's who He is: “a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

May I ask you a personal question? Thank you. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord? That's the first question. You do? Then may I ask you another question? Is He your Lord? Now, don't answer out loud and don't answer easily, because I want you to think about it. It's one thing to say, “Yea, verily, I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.” But the second question follows, is He your Lord? Let's be more specific. Is He Lord of your tongue? Is He Lord of your time? Is He Lord of your treasure? Is He Lord of your talents? Is He Lord of your testimony? Is He truly Lord? Is He Lord in deed as well as word? It's one thing to sing, “Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.” It's another thing to mean it.

Jesus Christ is called “Lord” far more than He is called “Savior”. He is called “Lord” 747 times in the New Testament. He is Lord. Ever so often someone says, “Well, I decided to make Him Lord.” Too late for that. He is Lord. Acts chapter two verse thirty-six. “Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.”

The question is not, “Will you make Him Lord.” The question is, “Will you submit to

His Lordship”? Can you imagine what it meant to those Jewish shepherds that night to hear the angels say, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus”? Or Mary to hear that and the shepherds to say, to hear the angels say, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

What does that word “Lord” mean? What did it mean to these shepherds? It meant Jehovah to them. Jehovah, God Almighty. When, the angels said, “a Savior which is Christ the Lord,” the angel was saying He is co-equal, co-eternal with the almighty. The angel said, “You’ll call His name Jesus.” That’s what the parents were told, the earthly mother and child of a heavenly Father. Jesus. There’s an Old Testament name, Jesus, only it’s pronounced in the Old Testament, Joshua—Yeshua. Do you know what it means? Jehovah saves. This baby is the Jehovah that saves. That name “Jehovah” is used 7,000 times in the Old Testament and in the King James Version that I’m preaching from is translated “Lord.” “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.”

Now, when a pious Jew was reading the Scripture and he came to that word that’s translated Lord, Jehovah Lord, when he came to that he would bow his head and worship. He would never even pronounce the word—he held it in such awe. When a scribe was translating the Scriptures and he came to that word, he would put down his old pen and get a new pen just to write that word. And then the angels said, “There’s born a Savior, Christ the Lord.” His given name is Jehovah saves.

Now, He is the Lord. For these shepherds to bow and worship Him is an amazing thing. Think of what that said in that day. And think of what it meant for a Gentile to say in that day “He is Lord.” For Rome held sway over the world at that time. And the Emperor was Caesar. And Caesar was more than an emperor to these people. He was a god to them. And in order to get along in the kingdom, you had to say “Caesar kurios”—Caesar is Lord. But now for a pious Jew to say this baby is Lord was a costly thing. For a Gentile to say this baby is Lord was a costly thing. Because when they said that, they were saying Caesar is not Lord. There is one Lord and His name is Jesus. That’s the reason so many of them were put to death. They could have gotten along splendidly if they had said, “Jesus is a god.” And we’ll put Him in a little niche in the Pantheon with all of the other gods, but they would say that. They said, “Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” That’s why they were thrown to the lions in the coliseums. I can see a little crowd there huddled in the coliseum and they are singing. Very much like we sang this morning. He is Lord. He is risen from the dead and He is Lord, just before their blood would redden the mouths of those lions. I don’t know it happened this way, but it could. When the apostle Paul laid his head on that chopping block, just before his head toppled into a basket and his blood ran down into the Tiber River there.

The executioner may have said to him, do you have any last words? I believe he would have said, "Yes, Jesus is Lord." Jesus is Lord.

Now, I'm asking this question. Not, do you believe in His Lordship? I'm asking this questions this Christmas: is Christ your Lord? I want to mention three things that are true if Christ is your Lord. And, I pray God will write them upon your heart if you are willing to confess Him as Lord.

## **I. The Confession of Christ as Lord Secures Salvation**

Number one, the confession of his lordship secures salvation. Now that's the point. Let me give you the principle. The principle is this: that we cannot receive what Jesus gives and refuse who Jesus is. Now let me say that again. You cannot receive what Jesus gives—that's salvation—and refuse who Jesus is—that is, He is Lord. You see, look again in verses ten and eleven. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior ..." Yes, He is a Savior. But what kind of a Savior? "...a Savior which is Christ the Lord."

What is the great need in the world today? Is it information? We're drowning in a sea of information. Knowledge may double, truth never. If it is information that we need, God would have sent to us an educator. What is the need in the world today? Is it technology? We're afraid of our technology today. If technology were the need, God would have sent a scientist. What is the need in the world? Is it money? Do you think that your problems would be solved if you had more money? If money had been the need, God would have sent an economist. Do you think the need is more leisure? Maybe God should have sent an entertainer. No. Our great need is salvation. Is it not? And so God sent a Savior. And I'm amazed and wonder and blessed that He sent the message to humble shepherds. And old Herod, the King, never did quite get it. He never did quite understand. The shepherds, humble shepherds understood the message. Why? Because God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes. Do you want to understand who Jesus Christ is today? Then lay your intellectual pride in the dust and come to Him and say, Lord, reveal this truth to me. Sing it and say it, "Oh come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord."

Now, I said that the confession of His Lordship secures salvation. That's the only way to be saved. Put in your margin Romans 10, verses 9 and 10. Listen to it. This is black print on white paper. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus..." Do you know what the Greek construction really is? "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth

confession is made unto salvation.” What is the confession? Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord.

Now, are you saved? Before you answer, may I ask, “Is Christ your Lord?” Now if Christ is not your Lord, God sent me to tell you, you’re not saved. You say, “Well, I accepted Him as Savior.” The Bible never says accept Him as Savior. The Bible says receive Him. When I got married, I didn’t receive Joyce as housekeeper. I took Joyce. I said, “I do.” And I meant it. I gave all of me to all of her. I’ve learned a lot more about me and a whole lot more about her since that time. I learned what I did when I said I do. But I meant it when I said, “I do.” You cannot come to Jesus Christ with your fingers crossed behind your back and say, “Well, I’ll have a little Saviorhood today but no Lordship, thank you.” It’s not a cafeteria line.

One of the greatest preachers who ever lived was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Let me quote. And I copied it out for you. Listen to it. Spurgeon said, “If the convert declares that he knows the Lord’s will but doesn’t mean to attend to it, it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved.” Did you hear that? Listen to it again. “If the convert declares that he knows the Lord’s will, but doesn’t mean to attend to it, it is your duty, your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Don’t imagine the gospel is magnified or God glorified but going to worldliness and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their Savior while they are wedded to their idols and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so, I tell them a lie. I pervert the gospel. I insult Christ. I turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.”

Now the great Spurgeon was not saying you’re saved by good works. But he is saying you are saved by someone who is the Lord. He is the Lord. A Savior, which is Christ the Lord. You cannot have a come in Savior and a stay out Lord type of salvation. What is it all about? What is the bottom line? Why did Jesus step out of heaven? Why did He walk the shores of Galilee? Why did He, settle the dust with His blood? Why? May I give you a scripture? Listen to it. Romans 14, verse 9, “For to this end...” here’s the bottom line, here the purpose, “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” That’s it. That’s it. That’s a good verse to memorize, is it not? Let me give it to you again. Romans chapter 14 and verse 9. And so, listen. The confession of His Lordship secures salvation. I cannot receive what Jesus gives and refuse who Jesus is. Will you say amen to that?

Now, you may be waltzing into hell thinking you’re going to heaven because you have never ever taken self off the throne and received the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace, but God does not save rebels. Have you bowed the knee to Jesus Christ? I didn’t say, tip the hat. I don’t care what you believe about Him, have you bowed the knee to Jesus? What is the principle? You cannot receive what Jesus gives and refuse who Jesus is. “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ ...”—

the what?—“...the Lord.”

## **II. The Confession of Christ as Lord Simplifies Service**

All right, now, here's the second thing I want to lay on your heart. The confession of Christ as Lord not only secures salvation, the confession of Christ as Lord simplifies service. Here's the principle. We cannot confess Him as Lord and serve any other master. Now, if He's Lord, then He's your master. He Himself, said, “No man can serve two masters.” When you said “yes” to Jesus Christ, when you received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, listen to me, that was the last independent decision you ever made. From there on, you don't make any more independent decisions. He is Lord. He is master.

And, look in Luke chapter 2, verse 17. “And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.” Their lives now are transformed. They have, going about with a testimony. Their lives and their decisions are drastically changed and narrowed.

Some years ago I heard about a young pastor who came to a church, a moderately small church, about 300 members. And one of the giddy ladies in that church said to him, “You're going to have a difficult time trying to please all 300 of us.” He said, “Madam, there's only one I'm going to try to please and His name is Jesus. And if I please Him that ought to be good enough for the rest of you.” Jesus. You see, He is the One that we serve. We don't serve other people.

Now, there's only one question that you ask after you bow the knee to Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Master and Savior of your life. It's the question that the apostle Paul asked on the road to Damascus. “Lord, what would you have me to do?” That's it. Lord, what do You want me to do? You see, it simplifies service. Lord, what do You want? The best advice that anybody ever gave to another person was the advice that Mary gave that day when Jesus was turning water into wine, before He did it. Mary said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” You'll never get better advice than that. Whatever He says to you, do it. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Now, my life is to please Jesus. If I please Jesus, it doesn't matter whom I displease. If I displease Jesus, it really doesn't matter who I please. And the way to please Jesus is to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I say it simplifies service. Have you ever decided to go out to eat? We all get in the automobile and say, “Where do you want to go?” Well, you want some Chinese? I don't know. You want to go Mexican? Well, how about if I...? And here's the car, this way going all through the neighborhood like this. Turn here; you turn there. You're not going anywhere. But have you ever decided that you're going to a place before you get in the automobile? It saves a lot of crooks and turns, doesn't it? You see, once you know that your life is under His control, you don't have to

make so many little decisions because you have made one big decision. Now it doesn't mean that you don't have to pray and ask Him for guidance. But listen, it is the last independent decision you'll ever make. "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

Now, when you say, "Christ is Lord," that doesn't mean that it is Christ and... It's never Christ and self, or Christ and the world. It is Christ or self, and Christ or the world. You see, He is Alpha and Omega. That means, He's the bookends. You don't add anything to the Lord Jesus Christ. Not Christ and. Not Christ after.

Let me give you a passage of Scripture I copied out for you. Luke 9—Luke 9. You're in, Luke 2—Luke 9. Look in verse 57. Now, Jesus now has those who want to follow Him. He has many cousins like this in Bellevue. "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man..." that was Jesus' term for Himself "...the Son of Man hath no where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first ..." Just underscore that, "me first." Now that's the that's the religion in America. We have "In God We Trust" on our money, but me first on our hearts. Me first. "...suffer me first, allow me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but let me first, let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." Suffer me first; allow me first. May I tell you, if Jesus Christ doesn't come first, He doesn't come at all. You see, no one can serve two masters. Jesus said that. It's absolutely, totally impossible to serve two masters. His Lordship means that He is first. It's summed up in Matthew chapter 6, verse 33. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." When you say it and mean it that Jesus Christ is Lord, say it and mean it, it secures salvation. When you say it and mean it, it simplifies service

### **III. The Confession of Christ as Lord Subdues Satan**

.Now here's the third thing. When you confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, that subdues Satan. The confession of His Lordship subdues Satan. Here's the principle. The principle is this, we need not fear what Satan does when we know who Jesus is, when we know who Jesus is. He is Lord. The devil hopes you never really truly understand the authority and the power that you have when the Lord of heaven and earth lives in your hearts.

Look in Luke 2 verses 10 and 11. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is

born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” There’s one fear that removes all other fears and it’s the fear of God. And this baby was born that He might take away fear. You see, he calls Him a Savior who is Christ the Lord. The word “Christ,” look at it. It comes from the Greek word “Christos,” which is a translation of the Old Testament word translated “Messiah.” When he says He is “Christ the Lord” it means He is the Messiah. Well, who is the Messiah? Why does the Messiah come? To crush Satan’s kingdom. Do you know the first prophecy in the Bible? It’s found back in the book of Genesis—Genesis chapter 3, verses 14 and 15. Listen to it. God is addressing Satan. Here he’s taken the form of a serpent. “And the Lord said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, cursed, thou art cursed above all cattle. and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” Now verse 15. Here’s the first prophecy in the Bible. “And I will put enmity...” Boys and girls, that means warfare. “I will put warfare between thee and the woman...” That is, between the serpent and the woman. “...and between thy seed and her seed.” That is, the decedents of the serpent, Satan’s devilish kingdom. And the descendent of the woman, “... between thy seed and her seed; it...”—the seed of the woman—“...shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Pastor, what on earth is all of that about? Well, first of all, let me say it is a very strange passage. The old rabbis use to scratch their heads and look at this. They say, we don’t understand this. The seed of the woman. It’s not the woman that has seed. The semen is of the man. That’s what semen means, seed. The seed comes from the man, not the woman. Notice Adam is there, but Adam is not mentioned at all. Adam is out of this thing. Now here’s a woman who is going to have descendancy. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The seed of the serpent is going to bruise the heel of this child, but He’s going to crush your head. He’s going to put His heel on your head and crush it. A virgin-born child, a little baby. The seed of a virgin is going to crush the serpent’s head. And friend, when you receive that child into your life, the crucified, risen Son of God you have a power in you that is awesome.

You say, “Well, I’m not afraid of the devil.” Well, that’s not enough. He ought to be afraid of you. You have, when you confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, you have awesome power in you. To confess that Jesus is Lord subdues Satan. Listen to Revelation chapter 12 and verse 11. “And they overcame him...”—who? The serpent—“...by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. And they loved not their lives unto death.” What is your testimony? Your testimony is that Jesus Christ is Lord. I belong to Him and He belongs to me. A great scripture here to put in your margin, in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14. “For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood...” He’s talking about us now, the children of Adam. “...who are partakers of flesh and blood...” Everybody here is in flesh and blood. That’s right? That’s the suit you

wore this morning, flesh and blood. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise...”—now speaking of Jesus—“...took part of the same; that God...”—that is, took flesh and blood—“...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

Why did Jesus take flesh and blood? Why did He step out of the glory? Why the incarnation? Why the virgin birth? So that He might die. God in Spirit cannot die. “God is spirit and they that worship Him worship Him in spirit and in truth.” “The wages of sin is death...” “The soul that sinneth, it must surely die.” “Without shedding of blood is no remission...” Jesus had to take flesh and blood that He might become a sacrifice upon that cross. But in so doing, He brought Satan’s kingdom crashing down.

I got a letter awhile back,  
Dear Dr. Rogers,

I’m a member of Bellevue and I love the cute little stories you tell about children. I’ve been a kindergarten teacher in Covington for 21 years. And just when I think I’ve heard it all something else will pop out of their little mouths. I thought you would appreciate this.

Last year we were making Santa Claus when one of my students asked me whose birthday it was. I told him, “Jesus”. Another child said, “I thought He got stabbed on the cross?” Someone else spoke up and said, “It’s Okay, because He busted out of the rocks!”

Boy, I like that. He got stabbed on the cross, friend. But He busted out of the rocks, didn’t He! This kindergarten teacher said, “I didn’t say anything else. Everyone seemed to be satisfied with the last answer.”

When you say, “My sin is under the blood, Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.” When you bring you life in alliance with His divine will. And you simplify service by saying, “I will follow Him—any time, any place, anywhere, any cost.” Then friend, you’re going to find out that Satan will cower before you. He trembles at a holy Christian. He cowers before a man of God. So long we’ve said, “Devil, if you leave me alone, I’ll leave you alone.” That’s not good enough. Friend, we need to be on the offensive. The Devil will try to mold you into this world’s system. When you not only believe it in your heart, but confess it with your mouth, do you know what’s going to happen? You will get bolder and bolder. People say, “When I get saved, what am I going to do with that old crowd?” You think I need to leave the old crowd, Pastor? Nope, you just confess Jesus is Lord, they’ll leave you. You get bold in the Lord, you’re going to have to go out and get them get them back so you can tell them about Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

What does the confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ do? It will do the same thing

for you it did for these servants, these shepherds. It secures salvation. It simplifies service. It subdues Satan. Because my precious friend, He is Lord. Do you believe it?

Now, is He your Lord? I'm not asking are you a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. May I ask you one last question and I'll wrap this up. And by the way, I'm not asking you if you will confess Him as Lord. You will. You will. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God." "God has given Him a name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Hitler will bow his head and say Jesus is Lord. Saddam Hussein will bow and say that Jesus is Lord. Satan himself will bow on his thorny knees and say that Jesus Christ is Lord. And you will, one of these days.

They were in a revival meeting. They were giving an invitation and a girl sitting back in the back was crying. A personal worker went back there and said, "Would you come forward and receive Jesus?" She said, "No, there are too many people here. I'm afraid. I'd like to be saved, but I want to be saved back here." The worker said, "I'm sorry. You can't be saved back here. If you want to be saved you, you've got to come forward." And he went back and left her there crying. The next night, the same thing happened. She was under deep conviction crying. He went back to her and said, "Would you come and acknowledge Christ as your Savior and Lord?" She said, "No, I can't do that. I just can't do that. Can't I be saved back here?" He said, "Nope. If you want to be saved you've got to be saved down front." I know what you're thinking. Let me finish. The third night, the third night, he went back. She was convulsed in tears. And said, "Young lady, won't you come and acknowledge Christ as your Lord and Savior?" She said, "I will. Oh yes, I will". She said, "I'll go anywhere, I'll do anything if I can have peace with God." He said, "Now you don't need to come forward. You can be saved back here."

Jesus said, "If you are ashamed of Me and My word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." That's why I'm going to give an invitation this morning. I'm going to ask this morning, people in this building who would say, "Yes, I believe He is Lord. And openly and publicly I'm letting it be known that I am not ashamed of Him." I'm going to ask a minister of our church to stand at the head of each of these isles all the way across the front to receive those of you who come.

Then I'm going to ask a minister to stand under that banner up there that says "Redeemer" way up in the balcony to my right, and the one that says "Messiah" over here to my left for those of you in the balcony. And we're going to sing a song, by the way, that I helped Bill Gaither to write. How about that? You didn't know I was a songwriter, did you? It says this, "Lord, I believe. Lord, I receive. Lord, I confess You

now.” If you believe and if you receive then it follows as night follows day that you’ll want to let others know. “Lord, I believe. Lord, I receive. Lord, I confess You now.” If I could do it for you, I would. But I can’t. This is your decision. Some of you are members of this church. I want to say it kindly: you’ve been trusting church membership and other sentimental things to save you. But you’ve never actually really and truly made Him Lord of your life and you ought to do it today.

Well, Pastor Rogers, what would I say when I go down there? Well, I’m going to lead you in a little prayer. And in this prayer you can say yes to Jesus. And when you come forward you can just say, “I’m trusting Jesus.”

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I pray that many will come today and say Yes to Christ. Precious friend, if you want to be saved would you pray a prayer like this. Dear God, I’m a sinner and I’m lost. And I need to be saved. And I want to be saved. Jesus, I believe You are Christ the Lord. And I open my heart and I receive You into my life as my Savior, my Lord, my God, my Master, my King. I am weak. You are strong. And I know that I can’t be saved by obeying You. I can’t be saved by good works. It’s a gift. But Lord, I do mean business. I yield my life to You. I trust You now as my Savior and I yield to You as my Lord. Thank you for saving me. Amen.

# His Unequaled Birth

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 1, 2002**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 2:1–7**

*“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

LUKE 2:7

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Sacred Mystery of His Birth
- II. Saving Ministry of His Birth
- III. Sovereign Majesty of His Birth

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn, if you will, to Luke chapter 2, the Christmas story. I’m going to begin reading, in just a moment, in verse 1 of Luke chapter 2.

Upon an occasion I had an opportunity to witness to Muhammad Ali. And I prayed much about it and God arranged it where we could be together in a small room late at night before one of his fights, and we were talking about Jesus Christ. And I had had a prayer in my heart that this man might receive Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. And he was studying the Islamic faith. And so we were talking back and forth. And he challenged me with this question. He said, “You say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because He was born of a virgin. He didn’t have an earthly father.” And then he said to me, “Adam didn’t have a father or a mother. Wouldn’t that make Adam more a Son of God than Jesus?” I said, “Champ, I want you to understand this. Jesus was not the Son of God because He was born of a virgin; He was born of a virgin because He was the Son of God.

You see, Jesus did not have His start in Bethlehem. Jesus stepped out of the glory, as we’ve already told you. “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...” We’re going to be talking today about the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now I’m aware that the world laughs at the idea of a virgin birth. They think of that as some sort of primitive, medieval superstition or something. They laugh, they mock at the idea of the virgin birth. I can tell you furthermore the devil hates the idea of the virgin birth because it teaches both the humanity and the deity of His nemesis and our Savior, the

Lord Jesus Christ. But worse than the mockery of this world and the hatred of Satan is the ignorance of many so-called Christians concerning the virgin birth. Many of them doubt it. Some don't believe it at all. And others think that it is incidental. Friend, I want to show you in this message that you have no hope of salvation apart from the virgin birth. I want to show you that if you take away the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, you have destroyed the whole foundation of Christianity, and it will all collapse like a house of cards. It is not incidental. It is fundamental. Three thoughts this morning:

## **I. Sacred Mystery of His Birth**

First of all, I want you to think of the sacred mystery of His birth. Now go back to chapter 1. The angel has announced to Mary that she is going to be with child. Now, Mary is a virgin. She is espoused to a man named Joseph, but they've not come together in the act of marriage. The ceremony has not yet transpired. They are not living together as husband and wife. And yet, the angel Gabriel says, "Mary, you're going to have a baby." Now she asked a very pertinent question, beginning in verse 34: "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be?" Big question. "How is this going to happen? This is a mystery to me. How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" Now, the word no not literally means that she's not had sexual relations with a man. "And the angel answered, and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee—underscore the power of the Highest—shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin, Elisabeth, yet also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who is called barren. For with God—underscore this now, folks. You might underscore this next phrase two or three times—For with God nothing shall be impossible." Can you say amen to that? Now if you have difficulty with that, you're going to have difficulty with the virgin birth. "For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her."

Now we're talking about the mystery of the virgin birth. May I tell you that the virgin birth does not depend upon your understanding for its validation, is that okay? You don't have to understand it to validate it. There are a lot of things we don't understand. We don't understand how a brown cow can eat green grass and give white milk, churns, turns to yellow butter. We don't understand that. Most of us here don't even understand how a windshield wiper works. We know it works. I mean, it takes the water off the windshield, but if you had to write a diagram and describe to me what makes the windshield wiper go back and forth, there are many in this building who could not do it. Now some of you engineers could do that. Folks, I'm telling you there are a lot of things

we don't understand, but we experience. The late, great Vance Havner said, "I don't understand electricity, but I'm not going to sit around in the dark until I do."

Now, Mary asked a question, a good question, "How can this be, seeing I know not a man?" Now there are some people who say, "It's not the idea of a virgin birth. Is that not a biological impossibility?" Again, I want to tell you, that it is not a biological impossibility, if you let the angel answer the question, "Is there anything too hard for God. With God all things are possible."

The late, great Robert G. Lee, former pastor of this church, wrote a book that he gave me many years ago before I came to be the pastor of this church, called, Lord, I Believe, and it deals with the miracles. And in that here's a quotation from Dr. Lee. He said, and I quote, "I don't believe God is an impotent and puzzled bellhop, running up and down the corridors of the house He designed by His omniscience and created by His omnipotence, having lost the key to some of the mystery rooms of His own house. It is impossible for Him to be baffled or bothered or chained by the physical elements." Now what he is saying is that God is not bound by the very laws that He Himself has created in the universe that He Himself has made. He is the Master and the Lord of that universe. Now, God can do anything He well pleases because He is God.

I have no difficulty with the virgin birth if I believe in creation. Friend, I've often said if you can get past Genesis 1:1, you're home free concerning miracles. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Do you have difficulty believing the virgin birth? Listen to me, precious friend. God made the first man without a father or a mother, out of clay that He formed out of nothing. Now it may be a mystery to you, but it is not a mystery to God.

Now, I love this verse: 1 Timothy 3, verse 16: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh..." Now that's, that's what the virgin birth is all about. "...God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels..." Have you ever thought about that, seen of angels? Did you know through all eternity, the eons of the ages, no angel had ever seen God because God is invisible? The first time any angel, or anybody, ever saw God was when the Word was made flesh. The angels said, "There is God lying in a manger." "...seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory." Don't worry if you can't explain the virgin birth. You couldn't explain the virgin birth anymore than you could explain God. When you can explain God, then perhaps you can explain the virgin birth. You see, there is this sacred mystery of the virgin birth. Great is the mystery of godliness. We join Mary in saying, "How can this be," and we join the angel when we say, "With God all things are possible." And God's people said...amen. Settled. That's it. God did it. If you have difficulty believing the virgin birth, I'll tell you what your real difficulty is. Your God is too small. Your God is too small.

## II. Saving Ministry of His Birth

Second point. I want you to see not only the sacred mystery of it, but I want, and this is very important, the saving ministry of the virgin birth. Now let's begin in Luke 2, verse 8: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid." That means they were scared out of their wits. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David—underscore this phrase—a Savior, A Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The virgin birth and the incarnation; that is, God being made flesh, was necessary for our salvation. Now I want you to follow me here.

God gave Adam and Eve dominion in the Garden of Eden. They sinned and they lost that dominion. They forfeited it. They turned it over to Satan. And rather than being servants of God, they became slaves of Satan and they infected the entire human race, with sin. Our dominion was lost by a M-A-N, a man. The only way it can ever be returned to us is by a man, another man, and that other man is the Lord Jesus. All of us today are represented by one of two men—either Adam or Jesus. In Adam all die; in Christ all are made alive. And really, so, all, there are really only two men who've ever lived and the rest of us are part and parcel of those two men. Now, Jesus Christ, the last Adam, came, born of a virgin, to undo what the first Adam did. Now, apart from the virgin birth, therefore, there is no hope of salvation. Well, how did He come to undo what the first Adam did? Well, the Bible clearly and plainly teaches that the wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth it shall surely die. And the Bible says, "Without shedding of blood in no remission." Now sin must be paid for. It must be atoned. And it must be atoned by shed blood. God in Spirit has no blood. Now God in Spirit. God is Spirit the Bible says. The great, eternal I AM is Spirit. Well, the great, eternal I AM cannot die. The great, eternal I AM cannot bleed. But this, this salvation was lost by a man. This dominion was lost by a man. Therefore, it must be redeemed by a man. "For without shedding of blood is no remission." But not just any man can do. This man must be a perfect man. He must be sinless and He also must be innocent. Now, listen. We're all sons and daughters of Adam by birth, and no son or daughter of Adam can qualify. Why? Put in your Bible Romans 5:12 in your margin. The Bible says, "Wherefore, as by one man [his name is Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Is there anybody here in this auditorium who would dare stand up and say I've never sinned? Is there anybody here who would have

the audacity, the unmitigated gall, to stand up and say I've never sinned? Of course not! We know that we're sinners—by birth, by choice, by practice, by nature. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Now had Jesus Christ been born like we were born He would have been a son of Adam. Had He been the son of Adam, He would have been a sinner. Had He been a sinner, He could not have been innocent. Had He not been innocent, He could have been nobody's substitute—not mine, not yours, nobody else's. The only sin He could die for would be His own. Now God wants us saved. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” that we might be saved. And so, therefore, God's answer is a man, but a sinless man, a perfect man, the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, someone who was both truly human and fully sinless. Human, that He might undo what the first Adam did, that He might shed blood, but that blood must be sinless blood. Whose blood was in that baby? It wasn't Mary's blood. And by the way, when a little baby is being carried in its mother's womb, that little baby has a separate live from that mother. Sometimes these who call themselves pro-choice—I wish they would finish that sentence—choice to kill a baby. Somebody says, “Well, we've decided not to have this baby.” No, that's not your decision. You're going to have a baby. The only question is are you going to have a dead one or a live one? There is a baby. Bad. “Well, I have, I have, I have control over my own body.” That's not your body. It's somebody else's body. There's a different blood in that baby. The mother may have one blood type, the baby has another blood type. Sometimes in a paternity suit in a law court a father may prove that he did not sire a baby by blood tests. How is that? Because the bloodline is not determined by the mother, but by the father. Whose blood circulated in that little baby? It was the blood of God. Now you say, “Now, wait a minute. You said a, a while back that God doesn't have blood. God is Spirit.” Now you're getting on. Now you're catching on. Listen. Acts chapter 20, verse 28. Put it down. Paul is talking to the Ephesian elders, and he said: “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers—that is, a pastor better be careful because he has an obligation from God. The Holy Ghost has made him an overseer. That literally means a bishop. “Take heed,” he says, now listen, “to feed, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” “...feed the church of God, which He—God—has purchased with his own blood.” The blood of God circulated through that little baby in its mother's womb. Sinless blood. Innocent blood. That's the reason I said you take away the virgin birth and you have no hope of heaven. He came as He did, born of a virgin, to be what He was, sinless. He was what He was, sinless, to do what He did, die a substitutionary death. He died a substitutionary death to do what He did, atone for sin. He did what He did that we might be born again and go to heaven. No sinless sacrifice, no atonement; no atonement, no new birth; no new birth, no hope of heaven. He was born of a virgin that

we might be born again. He came to earth that we might go to heaven. He became the Son of man that we might become the sons and daughters of God. That's what it's all about. That is why we have the virgin birth.

Now, had He not been born of a virgin, He would have been a son of Adam. Mendel, who did his great work in genetics, said this, concerning genetics; that is, the, the effect of our genetic code, our DNA on the rest of us. Here's what, he said, and I want you to listen to this. Mendel's Law of Genetics, Harry Reemerden reminds us of this. Listen to this statement. "Every individual is the sum total of the characteristics recessive or dominant in its two progenitors." Every individual, everybody here is the sum total of the characteristics recessive or dominant in its two progenitors; that is, its two parents. Now let me put that in plain English. All that was in your father and mother is in you, all, not some, all. You are the sum total of the genetic characteristics of your father and mother.

Now, second thing, those characteristics, according to Mendel, may be recessive or they may be dominant. Now it may be they are just kind of lying low. So your, parents may have had good characteristics that are recessive in you, or they may have had bad characteristics that are recessive in you. Or they may have had good characteristics that are dominant in you or recessive in you, but it's all there in you. And so, it may, in a way, skip a generation, apparently. That's the reason you can, blame your parents for your bad behavior. But, friend, it is there. Now, you have to understand this. Now you can understand the reason for the virgin birth. Now remember, all that's in your parents is in you. Now suppose the parents of the Lord Jesus Christ had been both deity, God plus God. Then he would have been God because all that was in His parents was in Him. He would have been God, fully God, yes, perfectly God, but there'd be no humanity there. He would be remote, unapproachable. There's no way that He could save. Well, suppose that the parents of the Lord Jesus Christ had not been God plus God, but human plus human. Then Jesus would have been fully human. He would have inherited the characteristics of His Father and His mother. And in Adam all die. He would have been a sinner and could have been nobody's Savior. But now let's suppose that His Father, not suppose, but learn, that His Father is truly God. His mother is truly human. Then who is He? He is God in human flesh. He is the God-man. Not half God and half man. Not all God and no man. Not all man and no God. He is the only begotten Son of God. He is the only one qualified to die upon that cross for our salvation. Never overlook, never knock the virgin birth. Thank God that God stepped out of heaven and was born of a virgin. That's the way, that's the reason the angel said, "This is good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." Jesus Christ is no the white man's Savior, the black man's Savior, the yellow man's Savior, the Western Savior, the Eastern Savior. He is the Savior of the world. This is good news which is to all people. He is. The world needs Jesus. Jews and Gentiles need Jesus. Young and old need

Jesus. Rich and poor need Jesus. Intellectual and illiterate, we all need Jesus. White man, black man, yellow man, red man, here, there, everywhere—this world needs Jesus. He is the virgin-born Son of God.

### **III. Sovereign Majesty of His Birth**

Now I come to the third and final point. I've talked about the sacred mystery of His birth. I've talked about the saving ministry of His birth. Let me talk to you about the sovereign majesty of His birth. Look again in Luke chapter 1. Let's begin in verse 30: "And the angel said unto her—the angel now is Gabriel; her is Mary—Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. And by the way, the name Jesus, the Old Testament name Joshua, same name, means Jehovah Saves. Now notice verse 32: "And He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David." Now we're talking about the sovereign majesty of this baby. "...the throne of his father, David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Now as the Son of God, He shares the nature of God; like Father, like Son. Who is this baby virgin born? Plain, straight, simple, listen to me. He is God in human flesh. Now the Mormons don't accept this. Oh, they believe He is a god, but not the one true God. Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept this. Those of the Islamic faith do not accept this. The Unitarians do not accept this. The liberal theologians do not accept this. But let me tell you what the Bible says. Put in your margin Hebrews 1, verse 8: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God—now listen. He's talking to the Son, to the Son, S-O-N—Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." This baby is as much God as if He were not man at all. He is the earthly child of a heavenly Father and the heavenly child of an earthly mother. That little baby lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, with His dimpled feet touching the straw is the Mighty God of Genesis 1:1. Do you believe it? I believe it. The apostle John believed it. John 1, verses 1 to 3, listen. "In the beginning was the Word—the Word is another name for Jesus—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God—now here it comes—and the Word was God. And the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." He made the manger that He lay in. He is God from everlasting. Jesus did not begin with Mary in Bethlehem. He existed as ageless with His Father in heaven. As has been well said, when He was born, He was as ageless as His Father and older than His mother. And He has come to rule and to reign.

## Conclusion

What's the world coming to? It's coming to Jesus. His is the cradle that will rock the world. You can believe that. One day our dear Savior is going to step out of the glory and those blessed nail-pierced feet will touch the Mount of Olives and there will be a great earthquake. And Jesus is going to make His way, to Jerusalem. And the government shall be upon His shoulders. What's wrong with the world today? Have you read the news this morning, yesterday, last week? Pick up any newspaper and you know there is something tragically wrong with our world, and it looks like we're looking into the barrel of a loaded cannon. There can be no real peace without the prince of peace. The answer to this world's problems is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the hope of the individual, the hope of the church, the hope of the family, the hope of this nation, and the hope of this world is Jesus Christ.

There used to be an old, English evangelist. His name was Henry Morehouse. And Henry Morehouse was a fearless preacher. He told a story I want to share with you. It's, it's an interesting story to me. He said in London there were a group of men many years ago who were in the London Zoo and they were having a little contest to see how many rats a terrier dog could kill. And they were betting on these things, very much like men bet on cockfights or bet on horse races or bet on dog races, like over here to the dog track. You know, that's one of the few places where the windows clean the people. And, they were betting on how many, rats a terrier could kill in a given period of time. And they took this little terrier and put him in a pen with 25 vicious rats. And the terrier was killing those rats rapidly, but he didn't kill enough. His owner lost some money on him. His owner pulled him out of that pit and kicked him and beat him mercilessly, and then, in a fit of anger, took the little dog and threw him over the fence into the lion cage, thinking the lion would devour him. That old lion came over and looked at that pitiful creature there, beaten and bloody. The lion just kind of nosed him and coddled him, and then kind of put his paws over him to protect him and looked at the man who had done such a thing. The old lion had seen it all. He was angry that such a thing had been done to another creature. About that time the zookeeper came, according to Henry Morehouse, and said, "Who did this? Who threw that dog in there?" And the man said, "Well, I did. I was just excited. I want you to get him out for me." The zookeeper acted like he didn't even hear it. Then again, the man got belligerent. He said, "I said I want my dog back." There's the dog there being protected by the lion. The zookeeper said, "You do? All right, I'll open the gate and let you go in and get him." Then Henry Morehouse said, "You know, I was like that, beaten, bruised, maimed, and wounded by Satan and by sin, and the Lion of Judah, the Lord Jesus, has come as my Savior and my Protector." I'm so glad that we have such a wonderful Savior this Christmas season. You know, this is a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful time to tell about Jesus.

Sometime ago, a lady received a telegram. She was middle-aged. She received a telegram. The telegram told her that she had inherited a fortune in this day when a million dollars was truly a million dollars. She had inherited more than a million dollars. She was flabbergasted. She didn't even know that she had a relative that had that kind of money. Ha. She was so excited she didn't know what to do. She was home by herself. She went to the telephone, picked it up, and said, "Operator, get me somebody on the line—anybody—I want to tell them what has happened." Shouldn't we feel that way about Jesus? Oh, I just want to tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why the virgin birth? He came to earth that we might go to heaven. The whole purpose is wrapped up in the substitutionary death. You see, the Bible says, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him—on Jesus—the iniquity of us all."

Let this hand represent you. Let this Bible that tells about sin represent sin. You are a sinner, you know. You know that the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." Do you know that you are destined and doomed to eternity without Christ if something is not done about your sin? Because I can tell you, there is one thing God will not do, and that is He will never overlook your sin. Is this getting through? There you are. There's your sin. Here's Jesus, virgin birth, the sinless Son of God. No taint in Him, no sin in Him, no blame on Him, and the Bible says, "...and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Our sins are laid on Jesus. The sinless one carried those sins to the cross, and in agony and blood He died upon that cross to pay our sin debt. Because our sin is on Jesus, thank God, His righteousness is on us. That's good news, amen? That's good news. And the Bible says it clearly, plainly, simply, sweetly, sublimely, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

If I could do it for you, I would. God knows I've preached as best I know how. If I could do it better, I would. God wants you saved. Why should you die and go to hell when we have such a wonderful salvation, why?

Bow your heads in prayer.

# Is There Room for Jesus This Christmas?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 18, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 2:1–7**

*“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

LUKE 2:7

## Outline

Introduction

- I. There Was No Room for Jesus
  - A. Ignorance
  - B. Indifference
  - C. Involvement
- II. There Is Still No Room for Jesus
  - A. There Is No Room for Jesus in Government
  - B. There Is No Room for Jesus in Education
  - C. There Is No Room for Jesus in Religion
  - D. There Is No Room for Jesus in Christmas
- III. We Must Make Room for Jesus
  - A. The Fellowship Factor
  - B. The Faithfulness Factor
  - C. The Future Factor

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Luke chapter 2, if you would, and when you have found it, look up here. Now Jesus told us in John chapter 10, verse 10, why He came—what Christmas is all about. He said, *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10) *L-i-f-e*: that’s life. But we human beings kind of get it backward, don’t we? Do you know, if you spell *live* backward, what it spells? Evil. We just take what God has given and somehow we just put it in reverse. And rather than living an abundant life, we live a life of evil. You know, Christmas sometimes, rather than drawing us closer to God, draws us away. And for many people the next few days are going to be those of rush and hurry and milling around the department stores, feet

aching, head throbbing, nerves frazzled. No wonder the little girl who was praying, “Forgive us our trespasses,” got confused and said, “Forgive us our Christmases.” We need, I think, to be forgiven sometimes for our Christmases. I want to put things back in focus this morning, if I can.

I want us to think today of something that Betty just sang about, and that is God in a manger—God in a feeding trough, if you will. Luke chapter 2, verse 1: *“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”* (Luke 2:1–7)

Three things I want you to think about this morning.

## **I. There Was No Room for Jesus**

First of all, there was no room for Jesus—no room for the Lord Jesus that first Christmas morn. *“There was no room”*—the Bible says—*“for them in the inn.”* And since then, there has been no room for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, think of Jesus, who was God—God in human flesh. He came out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe. He came through the portals of a virgin’s womb. He came from the atmosphere of heaven to the air of a stall, from the presence of angels to the company of animals, from the Father’s house of glory to a feeding trough, laid in straw.

Think of how the little baby, what sensation He must have had. When that baby’s eyes were opened, the first thing He saw were the dingy outlines of a stable. The first odors that came into His nostrils were the smells of cow dung on the floor. The first thing that came into His ears, perhaps, the munching of straw by the animals. The first sensation to that little baby skin was the prickling of straw, the sensation of that rough swaddling clothes that He was wrapped in.

Now it wasn’t by chance that the Bible records that there was no room for Him in the inn. I mean, this was not incidental, and it was not accidental. It was fundamental to something that had been true about the Lord Jesus, that was to be true about the Lord Jesus all of His earthly ministry, and is still true about the Lord Jesus: born in a stable.

But not only in His birth was there no room for Him in His life, as we’re going to see here, upon this earth—the only place that Jerusalem had for Him was, really, on a cross; in His death there was no room for Him: He was buried in a borrowed tomb. This

world never has had room for the Lord Jesus. Isaiah chapter 53 prophesied it: *“He is despised and rejected of men”* (Isaiah 53:3)—Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 3. And don’t think for a moment—not for a moment—that the world has changed. Don’t think that they had no room for Jesus then but we have room for the Lord Jesus today. The world that had no room for Jesus has not gotten better, and the world has no room for Jesus today.

Now, why was there no room for Jesus in the inn that day? I want to suggest some things.

### A. Ignorance

I think one reason that there was no room for the Lord Jesus that day was ignorance. I don’t think the innkeeper knew that He was the Son of God about to be delivered and about to be born. I don’t think he knew that. “Well,” you say, “then he’s not to be blamed.” Oh, no, I don’t agree with that, either. Ignorance is never innocence. There were some who did not know, but there were some who did know. Mary and Joseph certainly knew. The shepherds knew. The wise men knew. And yet there were some who did not know. Anna and Simeon in the temple knew. Elizabeth knew. But the innkeeper did not know. Don’t excuse yourself today if you don’t know truth. If you want to know, God will reveal Himself to you.

### B. Indifference

I’ll tell you another reason that they may not have known: not only ignorance, but, I believe, just indifference. Can you imagine what it must have been like? Here’s an innkeeper, and he shuttles this pregnant woman about to give birth to a child off into a cow stall. Now I’ve heard people try to exonerate the innkeeper and say, “Well, you know, I mean, after all, maybe that was the best he could do.” Frankly, I’ve never agreed with that. I’ve made the trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem. I know the territory. She traveled about ninety miles. You know, the only miracle was not the miracle of her conception; it was a miracle she was able to make that trip at all—I mean, just to come on a donkey over that torturous path just to get down to Jericho. She probably came down the Jordan rift along the course of the river Jordan; and then to go from Jericho all the way up to Jerusalem; and then from Jerusalem, to turn left and go down to Bethlehem—and here she is: she’s shuttled off to a cow stall. You say, “What if he really did not have room?” He had room. You say, “Where?” His own room. That’s right. He could have given that.

† You know the old story about the man who goes into the hotel and he says, “I need a room.” And the man says, “Well, there are no rooms.” “You can’t give me a room at all?” He says, “No.” He said, “I want to ask you a question: If the President of the United States were coming, would you have a room for him?” “Well,” he said, “yes.” And he

said, “Well, he’s not coming. I’ll take that one.”<sup>1</sup>

I mean, he could have given his own room.

### C. **Involvement**

Ignorance. Indifference. Maybe involvement. Maybe he was so busy he just did not have time—like so many of us today: we are so busy doing all of these other things. His rooms are being filled with guests and his purse is being filled with gold. And like so many of us today, we have no room for the Lord Jesus, because the Christmas bells are the ringing of the cash register, and the spirit of the King of kings has been replaced by the spirit of King Midas.

But again I want to say that it was not by accident that all of this happened. It was prophesied in the Bible. Micah chapter 5 and verse 2: *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”* (Micah 5:2)

Not only was there no room for the Lord Jesus at the time of His birth, but He was despised and rejected all of His life. John Rice has pointed out that they didn’t have any room for the Lord Jesus. They always begrudged Jesus everything. In Bethlehem, they begrudged Him a place to be born, and He was born in a cattle stall. King Herod begrudged Him His kingly title and out of fear and jealousy wanted to slay Him. At Nazareth they begrudged Him the honor and the fame that was due to Him and said, “He is a carpenter’s son.” (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3) The Pharisees begrudged Him His power and said, “Why, He cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.” (Matthew 12:24) They begrudged Him the authority of His Father’s house and said, “By what authority do you do these things?” (Matthew 21:23; Mark 11:28; Luke 20:2) They begrudged Him the Sabbath day over which He was the Lord of the Sabbath and criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath. They even begrudged Him the worship of harlots, prostitutes, and thieves, and they said, *“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”* (Luke 15:2) They begrudged Him every feast that He had, and they said, “He’s a winebibber and a glutton.” (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:39) They begrudged the Lord Jesus the alabaster box of ointment that was broken and anointed His head and His feet, and Judas said, “Why wasn’t this money given to the poor?” (Matthew 26:9; Mark 14:5)

They even begrudged Him that prayer of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane—broke into it with an army with staves and spears. They begrudged the Lord Jesus even His rightful title and name, “King of the Jews,” and they came to Pilate and they said, “Take it down and change it.” They even begrudged Him the clothes that He wore, and stripped Him naked before He was crucified, and gambled for His garments. They

begrudged Him a drink of water when He was on the cross, when He said, *“I thirst,”* (John 19:28) and they gave Him vinegar and gall to drink. (Matthew 27:34) And when He died in agony and gave up the spirit, they even begrudged His body the rest and the release that death would bring and rammed a spear into His side. They begrudged Him the testimony that His dead body would have on the cross, and they said, *“Get it down before the Sabbath day.”* (John 19:31) They begrudged Him the truth and the proof of His resurrection when they paid money to say that His disciples came and stole away His body. There was no room for the Lord Jesus in His birth, in His life, and in His death.

## **II. There Is Still No Room for Jesus**

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see: today—I mean, right here in this city and in this nation at this time—there is still very little room for the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **A. There Is No Room for Jesus in Government**

For example, there’s no room for the Lord Jesus in the governments of this world and even of this nation. It’s prophesied of Him in Psalms chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, *“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed,”*—that literally means “against His Christ”—*“saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”* (Psalm 2:2–3) The government of Jesus’ day, when He came the first time, had no place for Him. King Herod had no place for Him. The Jews of that day said, *“We have no king but Caesar.”* (John 19:15) And they chose a place with Caesar rather than peace with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the government hasn’t changed. Our government, the United States of America, was founded on the Judeo-Christian basis. There are no ifs, ands, and buts, no quibbles, about that to anybody who will study. And yet, under the guise of separation of church and state, we have secularized America and taken away our Christian foundation. And there are even those who don’t want to call this time “the Christmas holidays”; they now want to call it “winter break.”

### **B. There Is No Room for Jesus in Education**

There is no room for the Lord Jesus in our institutions of learning. There is room for evolution. There is room for Bible criticism. There is room for New Age ideas. But no room for the Lord Jesus. There’s room for condoms, but not for Christ. We have an AIDS epidemic, but we cannot post the Ten Commandments that teach marital and sexual chastity on the walls of our institutions. *All learning without the Lord Jesus is splendid ignorance.* Jeremiah chapter 4, verse 22: *“For my people is foolish, they have not known me...they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.”*

(Jeremiah 4:22)

¶ The National Education Association has a magazine called *NEA Today*. Somebody handed me a copy of that, and it dealt with how the NEA tells its teachers to deal with Halloween. The title of the article was “The ‘Horrors’ of Halloween.” You would think they would be against Halloween, but the title is only a parody. And this is what the article said; this is given to our secular teachers—at least, our teachers in secular education: “Both right-wing and religious extremists have accused school employees of witchcraft for using magic circles as a teaching technique. They have forced school libraries to remove books that mention witches, have secured bans on textbooks concerning stories about violence and sorcery, and in one case, have demanded that a school change its logo from a demon to something less sinister.” And then here’s what this magazine to teachers says: “If confusion or hysteria hits your school this Halloween, what should you do? Stick together as a faculty and keep informed. Be watchful. Don’t let any element in the community take the schools captive and make decisions that are rightfully ours”—that is, “If we want to teach the kids about witches, demons, and hobgoblins, that’s our privilege.” And then: “And most important of all, report any anti-Satanist activity immediately to your local association. It’s your best defense against what is usually the real aim of such activity: an attack on public education.” That’s very interesting. What they’re saying, in essence, is that there is room for the demonic, but there is no room for Jesus. That’s an amazing thing.¶

### C. **There Is No Room for Jesus in Religion**

Here in America there is little room for the Lord Jesus even in the world’s religion today. Now I know there’s a lot of sentimental talk about the baby Jesus, but this religious world really has no room for the Christ of Christmas. I’m talking about Him as we sang, “He Is Lord” and ascribing to Him His full deity. The Lord Jesus described the church of the last days in Revelation the third chapter, and He describes that church with Himself excluded, still on the outside. Revelation chapter 3:20—Jesus is saying to the church at Laodicea, “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.*” (Revelation 3:20) It’s as though the people are on the inside and Christ is on the outside knocking on the door.

We have religious institutions, some in this city, who deny His miracles. They deny His virgin birth. They deny His bodily resurrection. They deny the inspiration of His words. And they deny His claim to be the only Savior of mankind. You say, “Pastor Rogers, you’re an alarmist.” Oh, no. I’ve been reading recently about a group of intellectual eggheads who have gotten together. They call themselves theologians. And I remind you that the word *theology* comes from two words: *theos*, which means “God,” and *logos*, which means “the word”—that is, “the word about God.” But I don’t know why these people call themselves theologians. They don’t know the *theos*, and they don’t

believe the *logos*, so why should they call themselves theologians? It's like Grape Nuts: they're neither grapes nor nuts. And yet this is what they say.

Now here's what this Jesus Seminar said. They made headlines recently by denying the New Testament account of Jesus' miraculous conception and birth. They voted with multicolored pebbles and they decided that Mary must have had sexual intercourse either with Joseph or some unknown person before she became pregnant with Jesus. They also decreed that the visit of the wise men was a fabrication, the slaughter of the innocents was fiction, and the flight of the holy family into Egypt a fanciful allegory. Now these are people who have the distinction of being called "Reverend." They are reexamining the Bible. In my estimation, we need to reexamine them. For them to examine the Lord Jesus and to bring their human intellect like that against the Word of God, they remind me of a group of blind men in a cellar with a room full of lightning bugs in a jar about to examine the noonday sun. What do they know about it? There is no room for the Lord Jesus even in the world of religion.

#### **D. There Is No Room for Jesus in Christmas**

No room for Him in government. No room for Him in education. No room for Him in the churches. And very little room for Him this Christmas in Christmas. Do you know what will happen this Christmas season? Drunkenness and adultery will prevail. The biggest moneymakers will be the distillers. And when somebody who normally would not get drunk will drink, do you know what he'll say? "After all, it's Christmas." Think about it: "I mean, after all it's Christmas." There's a big traffic today in obscene Christmas cards. And in many churches, there's often a letdown in attendance, offerings, and evangelism. The heroes of the Christmas season are Tiny Tim, Rudolph, and some fat-faced, red-faced, old, red-nosed fictitious character. You know his name.

Now you say, "But, Pastor, everybody loves the baby Jesus." Well, sure they do! I mean, who can't get excited about a baby? Get a crowd that will dance around, stand around a manger and sing "Away in a Manger" and "Silent Night, Holy Night," and one week later they will be at a drunken brawl at a New Year's party—the same crowd. They don't understand the real meaning of Christmas. I mean, His virgin birth and His virtuous life, His vicarious death and His visible return, are one seamless garment.

### **III. We Must Make Room for Jesus**

Well, enough of that. There was no room for the Lord Jesus when He came the first time. There's very little real room for the Lord Jesus today in government, in education, in religion, or even in the celebration. Now here's the point. Here's what I want to talk to you about. Therefore—listen to me, those of you who name the name of Jesus; those of you who are saved, listen to me—with gratitude, joy, and full surrender, we absolutely must make room for the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our lives.

Now I want to tell you how we're going to do this. If you want to find the Lord Jesus this Christmas—I mean, if Christmas is not all that you feel that it ought to be; if somehow you're trying to be happy and find satisfaction in your gifts and your toys and your parties—they don't quite get there; if you want to find the Lord Jesus Christ, let me tell you how to find Him. Three factors I want to give you.

### A. **The Fellowship Factor**

The first factor is what I want to call the fellowship factor. I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 13 with me for just a moment and begin to read in verse 12: *"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."* (Hebrews 13:12) That literally means, when Jesus died in order to save us, He died outside the city walls of Jerusalem. He suffered outside the gate. If you visit the Holy Land, you'll find Calvary still outside the city walls, standing there by a bus station. In Jesus' time it was a garbage heap, a place of crucifixion—and that's where the Lord Jesus died. Don't get the idea that He died, as the song says, on "a green hill far, far away." No, no, He died in a place of ignominy and shame.

Now, look at it again. It says, *"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."* Now here's the word to you this Christmas; listen to it: *"Let us go forth therefore unto him without"—"outside"—"the camp, bearing his reproach."* If there were ever anything that this generation needs, it's to learn that lesson right there. Now if you don't mind marking in your Bible, I'd like for you to underscore that: *"Let us go [outside] the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."* (Hebrews 13:12–14) Now if you want to find the Lord Jesus today, you'll never find Him on the inside. He's not an insider. You'll always find the Lord Jesus on the outside. If you want to find the Lord Jesus, don't go to the inn; go to the stable. If you want to find the Lord Jesus, don't go inside the city; go outside the city. That's where you're going to find the Lord Jesus.

Now there are a lot of folks today at Christmastime who are very lonely. Some of you who are listening to me are lonely. Everybody else seems to be having parties, and you're not invited. Everybody else seems to have a house full of loved ones, and you're by yourself. Everybody else seems to be having a good time, but you are so lonely. And Christmas, which is supposed to be the happiest time of the year, for you may be the saddest and the loneliest time of the year.

Psychologists tell us that all human beings have three basic emotional needs—and see if you don't agree with these. I've thought about it. I'm sure they're true, and I think I could point it out from Scripture. And when those needs are not met, the person is lonely. Number one: Everybody has a need to love and be loved. We want somebody that we can love and somebody who will love us in return. Isn't that a deep need in human nature? Of course it is. And then, another of our great, great emotional needs is

we have a need for somebody to understand us. So many times we've said, "But you just don't understand: if I could just make it known." We have a need to love and to be loved. We have a need for someone to understand us. And then, here's the third thing: We all have a need to be needed and to be wanted. Someone to love and to love us, someone who can understand us, and someone who need us and wants us—isn't that true? Just nod your head. Don't you feel those things down deep in your heart?

Well, friend, Jesus, if you're lonely this Christmas season, and this for you is rather not the happiest but the loneliest time, the saddest time of the year, His name is Emmanuel, His name is Jesus, and He perfectly meets all three of your deepest needs. He is someone to love. And I want to tell you—and I hope it doesn't sound corny—I love Jesus. I love Jesus, and He loves me. I'll tell you something else: You may not understand me, but He does. And not only does He know the worst about me; He knows the best about me. And like Simon Peter: "Lord, you know that I love you. You know I'm weak." But there's someone who understands. And I'll tell you something else: He needs me and He wants me—so much that He suffered, bled, and died for me. And the deepest need of my life is met in the One that we call Jesus.

And where do you find Him this Christmas season? You're not going to find Him at the parties. You're not going to find Him in the bars. You're not going to find Him in the ballgames. He'll be in the barn or be outside the gate. Just go out there. "Well," you say, "I don't like it out there." Listen. Don't worry about it. He turns the barn into a palace. I mean, that's where He is. The Lord Jesus, "*despised and rejected of men*" (Isaiah 53:3)—"*let us go...unto him... bearing his reproach.*"

¶ I found this the other day: "Behold, the preacher mounted his pulpit and said, 'Let us give thanks,' and all bowed their heads. 'Let us give thanks for our marvelous bodies with ears to hear the music of the birds, eyes to see the fragile snowflake and the budding rose,' he said. And sadly, the blind, the deaf, and the crippled in body made their way out of the church. And he continued: 'Let us give thanks for food and drink and clothes to wear.' And those who hungered and thirsted and shivered with cold slowly walked out. 'And let us give thanks for the good things of the earth, our friends, our families, and our homes.' And there departed the poor, the homeless, and the forgotten ones who live alone in neglect. He continued to give thanks, and the people continued to leave until at last there was no one there. And he cried out, 'O Lord, why have they gone?' And the Lord spoke and said, 'You have exalted that which I have not promised, and you have given thanks for that which they all do not have. Remember my servant Job and my Son, Jesus. When have I promised an easy life for all men?' The preacher cried out, "Then what shall we thank thee for?" "For me. I have given myself; and, lo, I will be with you always.' Then the preacher ran to the door and spoke to the people sitting outside in sorrow, saying, 'Let us give thanks to God for the gift of Himself

through His Son Jesus Christ.’ And the blind man wept, and the friendless man clasped his neighbor and returned to the church. And the preacher said, ‘Let us give thanks that God is with us. Woe without Him.’ And the people said, ‘Amen.’”<sup>f</sup>

That’s what Christmas is about: not that you are surrounded with friends and family and fun and food and fellowship, but with Jesus. His name is Emmanuel, and you’ll find Him outside the gate. You’ll find Him over there in the barn. There’s the fellowship factor.

## **B. The Faithfulness Factor**

There’s another thing I want to say: There’s the faithfulness factor. Listen to me. You will find today that the world has no room for the Lord Jesus. And listen carefully. Are you listening? It will have little room for you if you stand up for the Lord Jesus. The world that had no room for Jesus will have no room for you if you truly stand up for the Lord Jesus. Don’t get the idea that if you live for the Lord Jesus, you’re going to be loved and flattered and praised. Every now and then some sweet little lady will say to me, “Oh, Brother Rogers, everybody just loves you. I think, “I wish you knew. I wish you could read some of my mail.” “Everybody just loves you.” No, they don’t. You come down for the Lord Jesus Christ, stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ, and this world will come down on you like a hammer. Jesus said in John 15, verses 19 and following, *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”* (John 15:19–20)

The world has no room for Jesus, and it will have no room for you if you follow Jesus. Did that get into your heart? You say, “Well, I don’t think I want to follow Him then.” That’s your choice. But you cannot hold on to this world’s system with one hand and Jesus Christ with the other hand, and call yourself a follower of Christ. When I say, “the world,” I’m not talking about Planet Earth, the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees. God made that, and it’s good. I’m talking about a system. The Bible calls it a “cosmos,” an organized system of evil, a value system that’s against our Lord and His Christ. Now the world will have no room for you.

Now I want to tell you something else. I’ve got no room for this world that crucified my Lord. If this world has no room for the Lord Jesus, why should I have room for this world? *“Friendship [with] the world is enmity with God.”* (James 4:4) And there’s a time when we draw a line and we say, “No, I don’t care what others say. I don’t care what others think. That world had no room for Jesus. It has no room for me. I have no room for that world in my heart and in my life.”

### C. The Future Factor

There is the fellowship factor. There is the faithfulness factor. But one last thing I want to say: There is the future factor. Now this world has no room for the Lord Jesus. It has no room for us. I want to tell you something wonderful: It's not always going to be that way. You ever read where our Lord Jesus taught us to pray this: *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"*? (Matthew 6:10) Now, would our Lord have taught us to pray that if that prayer would not have been answered? Have you ever read where Jesus said in the Beatitudes, *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"*? (Matthew 5:5) Have you ever read where the Bible says, *"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea,"* (Habakkuk 2:14) and Jesus shall reign? Oh, friend, what did the angels say? *"His name shall be called Jesus."* (Matthew 1:21) And He's going to rule *"over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* (Luke 1:33)

And one day those little baby feet that were scratched and pricked with straw in the manger will be those nail-pierced feet that are going to touch on the Mount of Olives when He comes again, and those swaddling clothes will be exchanged for a robe woven on looms of light, that crown of thorns will be replaced by a crown of any diadems, and that wilted reed that they put in His hand will become a scepter of iron. Those bloody nails will be removed and in His right hand, His power, majesty, and glory. I'm telling you something; you listen to me: When He was here the first time, He was rejected—despised, rejected of men. When He was here the first time, He stood before Pilate. When He comes again, Pilate will stand before Him. When He came the first time, He came as a baby. When He comes again, He comes as a King. When He came the first time, He was rejected, but our Lord says, *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."* (Romans 14:11)

There's coming a time when Jay Leno will say, "He is Lord." There's coming a time when Madonna will say, "He is Lord." There's coming a time when every politician on Capitol Hill and all of the wise men in the Pentagon will bow their knee and say, "He is Lord." There's coming a time when every Christ-rejecting, Christ-denying sinner will say, "He is Lord." There's coming a time when every liberal, Bible-doubting preacher will say, "He is Lord." Oh, friend, there is no room for Him now, but one of these days they'll say, "Make room for the King." He is on His way. Friend, listen; listen to me: *"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to be the sons of God."* (John 1:11–12)

## Conclusion

I love the Lord Jesus. If I had a thousand lives, I'd give Him every one of them. And so, what is my Christmas message as we go to this last week looking forward to

Christmas? There was no room for Him when He came the first time. There's still no room for Him today—or very little. You can make room for the Lord Jesus in your heart. Do you want to find Him? Just go outside the gate, or out to the barn: He's still there. And, oh, what a fellowship you'll have with Him!†

# The Crowded-Out Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 15, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 2:1–7**

*“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

LUKE 2:7

## Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is No Room for Jesus in This World’s Government
- II. There Is No Room for Jesus in This World’s Educational System
- III. There Is No Room for Jesus in This World’s Religion

Conclusion

- A. You Will Always Find Jesus on the Outside, Not on the Inside
- B. The Same World That Had No Room for Jesus Will Have No Room for You
- C. Being on the Outside with Jesus Is Not Bad; It Is Wonderful
- D. As Christians, We Can Have No Room in Our Hearts for a World That Had No Room for Jesus
- E. When We Go Outside to Jesus to Bear His Reproach, We Will See Him and Fellowship with Him

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn to the Gospel of Luke, the second chapter—a very familiar passage of Scripture. We're going to read the first seven verses in just a moment. But may I say that while we're thinking of a holy night, the night divine, as Jennifer has just sung about, tragically, the next few days, for many, will be days of rushing around, or hurry and worry. Fighting traffic in the department stores, our feet's burning, our heads aching, our nerves frayed.

A little girl who was reciting the Lord's Prayer meant to say, “Forgive us our trespasses,” but she said, “Forgive us our Christmases.” I believe that many of us perhaps need to pray that prayer, “Lord, forgive us our Christmases.” The first Christmas there was no room for the Lord Jesus in the inn. I'm afraid that today for many there will be no room for Jesus.

I want to speak today on this subject, “The Crowded Out Christ,” the crowded out Christ. Luke Chapter 2 verse 1, “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be registered. (And this

census first took place while Cyrenius was governing Syria.) So all went to be registered, every one to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be registered with Mary his betrothed wife, who was with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger;” and here is the verse, part of the verse that we're emphasizing today “because there was no room” for him, “for them in the inn.”

Now it is not by happenstance or mere circumstance that there was no room for the Lord Jesus. It was a prophecy that for all of His lifetime, for all of the history of this cruel world, there never has been and there never will be room for the Lord Jesus in this world's system.

The Lord Jesus was born in a stable. The Lord Jesus died outside the city of Jerusalem, not even inside, but outside the city of Jerusalem, crucified between two thieves. When the Lord Jesus was buried, He was buried in a borrowed tomb. There never has been room for the Lord Jesus Christ. And Isaiah chapter 53 verse 3 says of the Lord Jesus in prophecy, “He is despised and rejected of men.” He is the crowded out Christ. And don't think for one moment that the world system is improved. Don't think that this world today has somehow become more churchy. That is not true. The churches have become more worldly. But there has never been room for the Lord Jesus Christ. And why? Why was there no room when Mary and Joseph came to that inn in Bethlehem? Why? Well, you say, the innkeeper didn't know. He didn't know that this one, this baby was to be born king, King of Eternity. He didn't know. That is correct. He did not know. But ignorance is no excuse. The shepherds knew. The wise men knew. Mary and Joseph knew. Anna and Simeon knew. God speaks to those who want to know. Ignorance is never an excuse for not honoring the King of kings.

Many of you today, many who are listening to me through television or perhaps later through a tape are ignorant of just who the Lord Jesus is. But I want to tell you friend, that God holds you accountable for that ignorance. Because if you'll seek Him, you'll find Him. I believe that others did not know simply because they were just so careless that day. That innkeeper, his inn was filled with people. And he was lining his pockets with cash. It was a good time of the year for him. And when Caesar said all the world was going to be taxed, that was a bonanza for him, and many today. They're not interested in Jesus. The Newspapers are saying, “What is the shopping season like? Are we buying more this year or less this year? What are retail sales doing?” And for many people, the Christmas bells are the jingle of the cash register. And the spirit of King Midas has taken over the spirit of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus.

And I believe that there may have been in this innkeeper's heart just a little coldness, a little callousness. The Bible says here in verse five that Mary was great with child. She's about to be delivered. I mean, would you say to a young man and his wife who is about to give birth to a child, we don't have any room for you. You say, "Pastor, honestly, maybe he really didn't have any room." I know there was one room he could have given. That was his own. He could have given his own room. There was room.

You know there's an old story about a man who came to a hotel, and the man behind the desk said, "Well, we just don't have any room sir." He said, "Well I want to ask you a question? If the President of the United States were coming would you have a room for him?" "Well," he said, "yes." Well, he said, "Well, he's not coming. I'll take that one."

Now my friend, there's always room. if we want to make room. And yet there was no room for the Lord Jesus Christ. And many of us today are just calloused, or we're indifferent, or we're careless, or we're greedy or we're ignorant. But these are not excuses for not having room for the Lord Jesus, the King of kings.

You have to feel sorry for Mary. I don't know how old Mary was, the Bible doesn't tell us, but she was young. I would say perhaps eighteen or nineteen. This was her first baby. She had never had a child. She's away from home. You know every girl wants her mother near when she's giving birth to her first born. But Mary's mother was not there. There was no doctor there. Not even a mid-wife so far as we can tell from the Bible story. There were not sanitary conditions. How would you like to give birth to a baby, your first baby without your mother there, without a doctor there, and give birth in a barn.

And poor Joseph. Oh my dear friend, it was hard enough for me just to sit in that waiting room. But have you ever thought about Joseph, how helpless he must have felt. And how ashamed he must have felt that he could not provide better for Mary. There they are, out there in a cow barn, perhaps historians tell us it was probably more like a cave. But certainly it was a place where the animals were kept because the little baby was laid there in a manger. Again I want to say, it was not by accident, it was not by incident, that this happened. All of this was engineered by Almighty God.

The fact that Jesus Christ would be born in Bethlehem was prophesied centuries before by the prophet Micah. Micah Chapter 5 and verse 2, "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." That is God had engineered this down to the minutest detail.

And Caesar said, "All of the world is to be registered and taxed." And each one had to go to his own home city, his own hometown. Millions of people are moving about in the Roman Empire, that one verse of Scripture might be fulfilled. And again I say that it

was not incidental or accidental that there was no room for the Lord Jesus Christ, because this is a prophecy of the fact that the world never has had room for the Lord Jesus.

Dr. Rice, in a very wonderful book called *I Love Christmas*, has pointed out that the world never has had room for the Lord Jesus Christ. That this world has always begrudged everything that Jesus had. He pointed out that in Bethlehem, they begrudged Him a place to be born. And He had nowhere to lay His head. He pointed out that Herod begrudged Him His kingly title. And Herod sought to slay Him. Nazareth begrudged Him His fame, they were offended, and they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" The Pharisees begrudged the Lord Jesus the power that was His and said, "This man only cast out demons by the prince of demons, Beelzebub." They begrudged the Lord Jesus, His right to His Father's house, and when He cleansed the temple, they said, "By what authority do you do this." The chief priests begrudged the Lord Jesus the Sabbath over which He was the Lord, when He healed the sick and a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, they begrudged Him His own day where which He was Lord. They begrudged Him the worship that He received, even of harlots and publicans and they snarled at Him and said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." They begrudged Him every time of happiness and joy that He had. Every feast that He went to, and they said that He was a winebibber and a glutton. They begrudged Him the worship of a fallen woman, Mary who washed His feet with her tears and wiped them dry with her long black hair. They criticized Him for this. Judas begrudged Him a broken box of ointment, and said, "Why was this waste." The Pharisees even begrudged the cries of the little children as they said, "Hosanna in the highest." They sneered with children worshiped Him. They begrudged Him even an hour of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He prayed and the sweat was as drops of blood upon His brow, and there they came in to disturb the Lord Jesus, even in the hour of prayer with sticks and staves and swords to bind Him and carry Him away. The soldiers begrudged His very garments and striped Him naked when they crucified Him. They begrudged Him even His title, "King of the Jews," and asked Pilot to change that title. When He was on the cross dying, they begrudged Him even a drink of clear water and gave Him vinegar and gall to drink. They even begrudged the peace of death, put a spear in His side when He hung upon that cross. Everything that the Lord Jesus Christ had upon this earth, men begrudged Him, and today they still do. They begrudge Him, His miracles. The so-called Bible scholars begrudge His bodily resurrection. They quibble about the inspiration of His words. They try to strip from the Lord Jesus Christ His deity and the hold that He has in the hearts of men, and there's nothing that this world hates more than the fact that there is one Savior of the world, His name is Jesus Christ.

May I tell you this world never has and never will have room for the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't get the idea that if you honor Jesus, this world will honor you.

Having said that, I want to point out several things to you and make some applications.

## **I. There Is No Room for Jesus in This World's Government**

First of all, and I want you to learn this as we speak about the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no room for Jesus in this world's government. There is no room for Jesus in this world's government. I'm talking about the worldly system of things as they are today. The Bible says in Psalm Chapter 2 in the Old Testament, verses 2 and 3, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." The rulers of this world, the kings, the high potentates, they never have room for the Lord Jesus Christ. King Herod sought to slay this baby.

And my dear friend, the world never has room for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews of that day, when it was time for His crucifixion, were faced with fire. And Pilot said, "Shall I crucify your king?" And they said, "We have no king but Caesar." What irony that they would choose the cruel yoke of Rome in order to murder the Lord Jesus Christ. No room for Christ, but room for Caesar.

The governments of this world have not changed. I was reading recently about the United States government was going to make a Christmas stamp. And the Post Office had designed the stamp—it was a wreath. And the wreath was in a window. And there was a candle in the wreath. But someone looked at it, and said, "You know, the window pane behind that wreath resembles a cross. We'll have to change the design of this stamp." Because the windowpane resembled a cross. No room for the Lord Jesus Christ. We have secularized our society to where not only are we not only neutral, but we have an antipathy toward the things of God. And not just this country. My heart was saddened to read of what happened in the state of Israel last Christmas day, December the 25th, 1990—it broke my heart to read it because I love the Jewish nation. And I am a supporter of Israel. But there was a law passed December the 25th, 1990, that Messianic Jews, that is Jews that believe in Yeshua, as their Messiah, Yeshua, Jesus, cannot immigrate into Israel and be accepted there as automatic citizens. Others can, but you cannot believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and be accepted automatically as a citizen. Now the others can. In Israel, a Jew can believe almost anything except Jesus. You can be an atheistic Jew and receive automatic citizenship if you immigrate in. Or you can believe in New Age philosophies, but you may not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be accepted. Why the Bible says, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." There is no room for Jesus in the governments of this world.

## **II. There Is No Room for Jesus in This World's Educational System**

May I tell you, dear friend, there's no room for the Lord Jesus in the educational institutions of our world. Go to today's universities. Go to today's public schools, and you'll find there's room for evolution. You'll find there is room for humanism. You will find there is room for a study of the world's religions. There is room for biblical criticism, but there is no room for the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our public schools today, rather than developing character, we're developing characters. We have room for condoms but not for Christ. We cannot today post the Ten Commandments on the classroom walls, but we have policemen in the halls. And in some schools, the boys and girls are having to pass through metal detectors to get into the classroom lest they be armed with some weapon, and still no room for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was reading recently, that in Omaha at Westside High School in Omaha, Nebraska, a young lady said, "We want to have a Bible club." Her name is Brigette Mergins. We want a Bible club after class. There are other clubs that meet; we'd like to have a Bible club. And James Kilpatrick wrote about it in an editorial I read. "Their purpose was simple," said Kilpatrick, they wanted to discuss the Bible. They wanted to engage in Christian fellowship. They did not ask for a faculty sponsor, instead they would provide an acceptable older monitor."

Now the principal, Mr. Finley, said, "No. For such a group to meet regularly in a public high school," he believed, "would violate the establishment clause of the first amendment." Now, may I tell you at Westside High School in Omaha, they have discussed in the classrooms abortion. They have discussed in the classrooms homosexuality. They have shown in the classrooms a film called *The Omen*, dealing with devil worship. But according to this principal, you may not meet, even after school, as a club to discuss and fellowship around Jesus Christ. What I'm simply saying is this, that we have engineered ourselves to where there is no room for the Lord Jesus Christ in education. May I say that, without a knowledge of Jesus, all education is but splendid ignorance. And you educate people without a knowledge of our Lord and you make them clever devils.

General Omar Bradley once said, "We're living in a time when our achievements, our knowledge of science, has gone far beyond our power to control it. We have too many men of science, and too few men of God. We have brought about brilliance without wisdom, and power without conscience. We are living in a time of nuclear giants, and spiritual pygmies. No room for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah prophesied it in Jeremiah Chapter 4 and verse 22, "For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are fottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Now I

want to say again, there is room for everything but Jesus.

Somebody handed to me not long ago, the magazine from the NEA, that is the National Education Association. The date of the magazine, and if you're a teacher you can look this up, it was October 1990, and it was dealing with the issue of Halloween. And it was in the section called human rights. And the article was entitled, "The Horrors of Halloween." Now they didn't believe that Halloween was horrible, as a matter of fact they had the word "horrors" in quotation marks. The "Horrors" or Halloween, and it was an article telling how to deal with parents who don't wish to have witches and witchcraft and seances and all of these matters discussed in public schools. And here's what the article said, "Both right wing and religious extremists have accused school employees of witchcraft for using magic circles as a teaching technique and have forced school libraries to remove books that remove witches. Have secured bans on textbooks concerning stories about violence or sorcery. In one case have demanded that a school change its logo from a demon to something less sinister." And then this article in the NEA said this, "If confusion or hysteria hits your school this Halloween, what should you do? Stick together as a faculty and keep informed. Be watchful. Don't let any element in the community take the schools captive and make decisions that are rightfully ours." That is don't let the parents tell you what to do. "You" mister teacher, madam teacher, "are in control." And then here is the concluding and most chilling paragraph in this whole thing. "And most important of all, report all anti-satanist activity immediately to your local association. It's you're best defense against what's usually the real aim of such activity and attack on public education." Now if you find any anti-satanist, report it, because what this is, it is an attack on public education. Can you imagine them saying, "Report any anti-Christ activities. I can't. There is room for Satan. There is room in Halloween for all sorts of witchcraft and occult symbolism, but try putting a cross. Try putting up something about the Lord Jesus Christ, and this world, this world of education will say, "No."

### **III. There Is No Room for Jesus in This World's Religion**

There's no room for Jesus in this world's government. There is no room for Jesus in this world's education. May I say sadly enough there is no room for Jesus in this world's religion, in this world's religion. How many churches today are truly preaching the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ? How many are preaching the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ? How many are preaching the blood atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is to a religious world that the Lord Jesus is speaking in Revelation Chapter 3 and verse 20, when He says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." And the picture is Jesus Christ on the outside of a Laodocian church, knocking at the door, asking to be let in to the church

that bears His name.

Oh Jesus is the crowded out Christ. He was born, my dear friend, in a stable. He, my dear friend, was despised and rejected of men, nailed up on a cross, and buried in a borrowed tomb. May I say next, that really there's very little room for the Lord Jesus in Christmas? How many this Christmas season, honestly, will honor the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Do you know what will prevail in our city and in cities across America? Drunkenness and adultery and gluttony. Drunkenness, adultery and gluttony. Do you know who stands to make the most profit, the distillers—the distillers. The most beautiful ads you will see today will be the beer ads on television. That horse driving through the snow, isn't that a beautiful ad? You have to give them credit. I tell you, my dear friend, that the distillers today are looking forward to Christmas. And if somebody who does not ordinarily drink will drink at the Christmas party, what will he say? He will say, "Well after all, it's Christmas." You see, it is an excuse for drunkenness. There is a new industry today, obscene Christmas cards. Now what about the churches? Did you know at Christmas time in churches there's generally a let down in attendance. There's generally a let down in offerings, and generally a let down in evangelism. Who are the heroes of Christmas today? Tiny Tim, Rudolph, and a jolly red-faced man with whiskers. Those are the heroes—a fictitious character. Oh there are some who'll make much of the babe in the manger. Why they love to sing "Silent Night" in the bar rooms. The giddy crowd will dance around a manger, but nothing of the full deity of Christ, nothing of His lordship, nothing of His blood atonement, nothing of His saving power. There's no room for the Lord Jesus even in Christmas.

## Conclusion

The true Christmas tree is a cross. First Peter Chapter 2 verse 24, "He who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Well what does all of this mean to you? What does it mean to me? May I suggest quickly five things, and very quickly. Here they are, and listen to me this Christmas. Are you listening?

### A. **You Will Always Find Jesus on the Outside, Not on the Inside**

Number one, if you would like to find Jesus Christ this Christmas, you will find Him, but you will find Him where you will always find Him, despised and rejected of men, outside, not on the inside. Let me give you a verse of Scripture, put it down. Hebrews Chapter 13, beginning in verse 12, "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." That literally means, He died outside the city. Jesus died outside the city. And now verse 13 says, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

Now what is this saying? It says that when Jesus Christ was crucified, they did not

even have the decency to crucify Him inside the city. He was crucified outside the city, as some say on a garbage dump, outside the city. And the Bible says there in Hebrews, if you would find Him, you're going to have to go outside, where the Lord Jesus is. If you want to find Him, that's where you will find Him. Okay? Don't look for Him inside this world's system, you'll always find Him outside.

#### **B. The Same World That Had No Room for Jesus Will Have No Room for You**

Second point, second application, when you find Him, to fellowship with Him there, here's what you're going to discover. You're going to discover that the world that had no room for Jesus will now have no room for you. Now put it down big and plain and straight. When you find Jesus, you're going to find Him on the outside. And when you find the Lord Jesus on the outside, you're also going to discover the same world that had no room for Jesus, will have no room for you.

I want you to look, if you will, in John Chapter 15 verse 18, Jesus said, "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: yet because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep your also." Very clear, very plain, you cannot, my dear friend, go outside the camp without bearing His reproach. That's what the Bible says there in the book of Hebrews. Jesus died outside the city, and the Bible says, let's go outside the city with Him. And when we go outside to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ out there, then we go out to bare His reproach. This vile world is not a friend of grace and it will be no friend of yours. And the Bible says that friendship with this world is warfare with God.

#### **C. Being on the Outside with Jesus Is Not Bad; It Is Wonderful**

The third thing I want to say, not only must you go outside to find the Lord Jesus, but when you go outside to find the Lord Jesus, you are going to bare the reproach of the Lord Jesus. The third thing I want to say is, when you get out there, you are going to find it's not bad, it's wonderful. It is not bad. It is wonderful.

My dear friend, if you are sick and tired of this rat race, if you are sick and tired of what is happening in the end. If you're sick and tired of the materialism and the blasphemy, and the coarseness, and the crudeness, and the crowd in the inn, just go on out to the stable. There's plenty of room out there, number one. Number two, He's out there. And I want to tell you that His presence will turn that barn into a palace. And will turn that crib into a throne. Know sweet fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Don't ever, don't ever, don't ever feel sorry for yourself because you're an outsider. Because my dear friend, the outsiders are the insiders. They are there with the King of kings and the Lord

of lords.

**D. As Christians, We Can Have No Room in Our Hearts for a World That Had No Room for Jesus**

The fourth thing I want you to remember is this, my dear friend, that I as a Christian and you as a Christian, can have no room in our hearts for a world that had no room for Him. We cannot love this world that had no room for Jesus. Friendship with the world is warfare with God. How can we claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and still make room for a world system that nailed Him to the cross. The worldly Christian is a trader to heaven's King.

**E. When We Go Outside to Jesus to Bear His Reproach, We Will See Him and Fellowship with Him**

The last thing I want to say is this. That the writer of the book of Hebrews said, when we go outside to bare His reproach, the Bible says we'll see Him and fellowship with Him. And then it gives this explanation, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." One day there will be plenty of room for Jesus, and for all who follow Him. For the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and His grace. Room for Jesus? Is there room in your heart for Him? Is there? Have you received Him? "He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him to them gave He the power to become the sons of God."

# Mary's Little Lamb

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 24, 1995

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 2:7–11

*“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

LUKE 2:11

## Outline

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## Introduction

Be finding, if you would, please, Luke chapter 2. When you've found it, look up here.

When I was a little boy, we learned a nursery rhyme—I think you learned it, too: “Mary had a little lamb. Its fleece was white as snow.” I want to talk to you today about Mary's little Lamb. We read about that little Lamb in Luke chapter 2, Mary's little Lamb, beginning in verse 7: *“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch*

*over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:7–11)*

A little Lamb was born in Bethlehem. The great I AM was born a Lamb. It was not incidental and not accidental that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. I have visited Bethlehem many times. If you’ll read your newspaper today, Bethlehem is in the news in a big way today. But Bethlehem is a little village about five miles south of Jerusalem, and most of us would have heard very little, if anything, about it, had not a little Lamb been born in Bethlehem. But I say, it was not accidental, nor was it incidental. It had been prophesied for centuries—in Micah chapter 5 and verse 2: *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.” (Micah 5:2)*

How fitting that Mary’s Lamb would be born in Bethlehem! Did you know that for centuries the Jewish priests had been raising Passover lambs in Bethlehem? Those fields outside of Bethlehem, those shepherds’ fields, were fields where a very special breed of sacrificial lamb was being raised and nurtured that those lambs might be brought to Jerusalem and at Passover they might be slaughtered. It was there where God’s perfect Lamb, the Lord Jesus, was born. And as we know, He was born in a stable. And how fitting that a sacrificial Lamb would be born in a stable! Mary had a little Lamb.

Now, listen to me. Your destiny and the destiny of the world is wrapped up in Mary’s little Lamb. Four things I bring to your attention today about Mary’s little Lamb.

## **I. The Lamb in Prophecy**

The very first thing I want you to understand with me today is what I’m going to call the prophecy of that Lamb. Would you take your Bibles and go backward to the book of Exodus and find Exodus chapter 12? It’s worth turning to. Turn to Exodus chapter 12, and let me read the first six verses. But before I read them, let me give you the setting. The Jews have found themselves in bondage, in slavery. They’re down in Egypt. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is a cruel taskmaster, and they’re there with the gnawing, tormenting chains of bondage. And they need to be redeemed; they need to be set free. And God has a plan to redeem His people and to set them free, and that plan is wrapped up in a little Lamb. We’re talking about the Lamb in prophecy.

Notice verse 1: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month*

*of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man”—now, watch this—“a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.” And here are the qualifications for the lamb: “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from among the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.” (Exodus 12:1–6)*

Now, you think about it. They're slaves, and God is going to deliver them. And what is He going to use to deliver them? A lamb. Of all of the creatures, the most gentle, the most meek, the most defenseless is a lamb. A lamb has no fangs. It has no claws. It cannot run. It cannot fight. It can frighten nothing. A lamb seems to say to you, “Are you hungry? Eat me. Are you cold? Shear me.” A lamb seems to present itself to the slaughter.

† I heard a man tell one time of another man who worked in a slaughterhouse, and they slaughtered beef cattle. That man thought nothing of his job until one day the slaughterhouse began to process lambs and a lamb came through the chute. And he said, “It was my responsibility to cut the throat of that lamb.” He said, “I had never done that before.” He said, “I would watch the steer as they would wrestle and fight, but the little lamb just laid its neck back, and I put in the knife, and the red blood came out on my hand. And the little lamb looked up at me and then licked the blood from my hand.” He said, “I laid down my knife. I resigned my job.” He said, “I couldn't do that. I could not take the life of a little lamb so meek, so mild.”†

Now God is going to use a Lamb to deliver them from Egypt. Do you know what the symbol of Egypt was? It was a serpent. Not so long ago, I visited the British Museum in London. I wanted to see the section on Egyptology, and I went in there specifically to notice the crowns that the pharaohs would wear. And as you see that pharaoh's crown, you see that serpent coiled upon that crown there. As you see the pharaoh's scepter, you see that serpent coiled upon that scepter. And you're going to have a battle here: it is a battle between a lamb and a serpent: a seemingly defenseless, gentle, weak, meek, mild lamb and a venomous, hissing, poisonous serpent. I want you to notice this lamb, the lamb in prophecy.

### **A. It Was a Special Lamb**

Number one: It was a special lamb. Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6: “*Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats.*” (Exodus 12:5) One blemish would disqualify this lamb in prophecy. The

priests would take those lambs, those Passover lambs. They would open the mouth and look inside the mouth. They would examine the eyelids. They would look inside the ears. One blemish would disqualify this lamb, because he was the lamb in prophecy, and he spoke of Mary's little Lamb—"a lamb without blemish and without spot," (1 Peter 1:19) according to the Bible.

### **B. It Was a Slain Lamb**

But not only was he a special lamb. Look in verse 6—He was a slain lamb. Look at it: *"Ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening."* (Exodus 12:6) They took this lamb on the tenth day, kept it till the fourteenth day, and on the fourteenth day, at three p.m. in the afternoon, the father of the family would lift back the chin of that little lamb, cut the throat, and the blood of that lamb would be caught in a basin—another prophecy of Mary's Lamb that would one day be butchered on a cruel Roman cross.

### **C. It Was a Saving Lamb**

A special lamb. A slain lamb. But a saving lamb. Look now in verse 7: *"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it."* (Exodus 12:7) Skip down to verse 12: *"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."* (Exodus 12:12–13) This lamb—special lamb, slain lamb—was a saving lamb. God said, "Take the blood; put it on the door post; put it on the lintel of the house so that when everybody comes in the house, they will come in through and under the blood, because that's the way they will be safe, because my angel of judgment, my death angel, is coming through the land of Egypt." But God said, *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you."* (Exodus 12:13)

Now they could have put poetry on the door: it would have done no good. They could have encrusted the door with wonderful proverbs: it would have done no good. They could have overlaid the door with jewels and gold: it would have done no good. They could have put a little perfect living lamb outside that door: it would have done no good. Salvation does not come from the life of Christ but from the death of Christ. Salvation is not learning lessons from the life of Christ, but receiving life from the death of Christ. *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you."* (Exodus 12:13) For the Bible says, *"Without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22)

### **D. It Was a Shared Lamb**

But now, wait a moment. This special lamb, which was a slain lamb, which was a

saving lamb, then became a shared lamb. Look in verse 8: *“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”* (Exodus 12:8) That lamb was roasted. Not only was it slain, it was roasted. It speaks of Jesus, who endured the fires of God’s wrath for us, as Jesus baptized His soul in hell for us. And they roasted their lambs. Can you imagine what it must have been like that night in Egypt? All the Egyptians smell lamb roasting—a quarter of a million roasting lambs. And these people who had slain that lamb were now to eat that lamb. They ate it; they were to eat all of it. And as they were sharing a meal, a bunch of slaves were becoming a nation. And as they walked out of Egypt, a lamb walked out inside of them.

Now, you understand me, friend: It *“is Christ in you, the hope of glory”*; (Colossians 1:27) it is Christ that gives you your strength. That lamb—that special lamb, that slain lamb, that saving lamb—was a shared lamb. What a prophecy of Mary’s Lamb that you and I feed upon day by day!

## **II. The Lamb in History**

So, the first thing I want you to see as we think about Mary’s Lamb was what I want to call a Lamb in prophecy. And now I want you see, secondly, the Lamb in history, because, you see, Moses’ lamb only prophesied Mary’s Lamb. Mary had a little Lamb. John the Baptist knew that the babe that was born in Bethlehem was a lamb. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, John the Baptist said in John chapter 1, verse 29—do you remember it? What did he say?—*“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29)

### **A. He Was a Special Lamb**

Now I want to say about Jesus, number one, He was a special Lamb. Jesus was a lamb without spot, without blemish. He was the virgin-born Son of God. He was a miracle Lamb. You say, “Pastor Rogers, I believe that a virgin birth is an impossibility.” Well, I do, too, but I also believe *“with God all things are possible.”* (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27) And that little baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger was and is the eternal, uncreated, self-existing Word made flesh. The Great I AM became a Lamb. The Infinite became an infant, and God lay in a manger. He was a special Lamb without spot or blemish.

### **B. He Was a Slain Lamb**

He was a slain Lamb. Remember what John the Baptist said in John chapter 1, verse 29: *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”*? (John 1:29) Why was He born of a virgin? So that He could be sinless. Why was He sinless? So He could make a blood atonement. Remember the Bible says it is the blood that makes atonement for your sin. (Leviticus 17:11) The Bible says, *“Without shedding of blood is*

*no remission.*” (Hebrews 9:22)

Why couldn't God just overlook our sin? If God would overlook our sin and just say, "That's all right; I forgive it," and there were no blood atonement, God Himself would be unjust. God would be unholy. There needed to be a sinless sacrifice. No child of Adam could satisfy, because *"in Adam all die."* (1 Corinthians 15:22) The bloodline comes from the father. The bloodline is not established by the mother, but by the father. None of the baby's blood circulates through the mother's body. The mother may have one blood type and the child have another. The bloodline comes from the father. And while Mary was the earthly mother, God the Father was the heavenly Father. And the blood that flowed through the veins of Mary's Lamb was the very blood of God.

Now I want to give you a verse—I've given it to you before, but I want you to take heed to it. It's in Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, where Paul told the pastors of the church in Ephesus this: *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* (Acts 20:28) Whose blood was shed on the cross? God's blood. You say, "Well, God doesn't have blood: He's a spirit." God had blood when Jesus was here. When Jesus was on this earth, He had blood. The blood that flowed through the veins of the Son of God was the rich, red, royal blood of Almighty God.

### C. **He Was a Sinless Lamb**

He was a special Lamb. He was a slain Lamb. He came as He did—born of a virgin—to be what He was—sinless. He was what He was—sinless—to do what He did—die for our sins. And He died for our sins that He, being what He was, made us what we are not and ought to be—and that is sons of God. He came to earth that we might go to heaven. He was born of a virgin that we might be born again. He, friend, was made the Son of man that you and I might become sons and daughters of God. He died for us. Thank God for that.

Remember that I told you about the Passover lambs that were born in Bethlehem? Have you ever wondered why so much time was given to the last week in the life of Jesus? About one-third of the Gospels is given over to that last week. Why? Because, you see, those Passover lambs, being raised by the priests in the fields of Bethlehem, were out there. Those shepherds were watching those Passover lambs when the angel appeared to them. And over here is born Mary's Lamb. The angel says, "There's a Savior born." (Luke 2:11) Well, there came that special day that we call Palm Sunday—the Lord Jesus is coming down the Mount of Olives, and He is ascending up to the Temple Mount. At the same time the Lord Jesus is going in through that Eastern Gate, those Passover lambs are coming in through the Sheep Gate—at the same time. And up there on the Temple Mount those priests are examining those Passover lambs to

make certain that they are a perfect sacrifice. At the same time, God's Lamb, *"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,"* (John 1:29) is being examined by the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the Herodians and the scribes and the Roman officers. They were nit-picking; they were examining, trying to find some fault in the Lord Jesus. But Pilate had to confess, *"I find no fault in him."* (John 19:4, 6) They had to confess, *"Never man spake like this man."* (John 7:46) It became blatantly obvious that every charge that they laid against Him was a blasphemous lie. He was a perfect Lamb.

Jesus went from that Temple Mount to the Last Supper and then out to dark Gethsemane, and by nine a.m. He was on His way to the cross. And where was this cross? It was on Mount Moriah. And what was Mount Moriah? That's where the temple was. Where else was Mount Moriah? Mount Moriah was where God had told Abraham, *"I will provide myself a sacrifice."* (Genesis 22:8) Right there on Mount Moriah, this same place, this same rocky limestone hill where those lambs were, God's Lamb is being lifted up on a cruel Roman cross. It is three o'clock in the afternoon. The priests are lifting up the chins of those little Passover lambs, and they're cutting their throats; at the same time the Lamb of God is hanging on that cross and He is saying, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30)—*"It is paid in full."* And I want to tell you, priest, you can go home now. We don't need you anymore. Levites, we're finished with you. And, shepherds, you don't need to raise any more lambs out in the field of Bethlehem—because Mary had a little Lamb; His fleece was white as snow.

#### **D. He Was a Saving Lamb**

He was a special Lamb. He was a slain Lamb. He was a saving Lamb. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 7, *"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."* (1 Corinthians 5:7) May I ask you a question? In this Christmas season, have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

I tried my hand at poetry. I thought I would try to rewrite "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Here's what I wrote:

*Mary had a little Lamb,  
His fleece was white as snow.  
Son of God from Heaven above,  
For sinners here below.  
Mary's Son, Eternal God,  
He, the Great I Am,  
With wool so white on Christmas night  
Became a little Lamb.  
Mary had a little Lamb,*

*His fleece was white as snow.  
That spotless Lamb was crucified  
To pay the debt I owe.  
Oh, spotless Lamb, with wool so white  
Thy crimson blood I know  
Can take away my crimson sin,  
And wash me white as snow.*

I thank God for Mary's little Lamb that died upon that cross.

#### **E. He Was a Shared Lamb**

But not only was this Lamb a special Lamb; not only was this Lamb a slain Lamb; not only was Mary's Lamb a saving Lamb; but Mary's Lamb is to be a shared Lamb. That's why when we come to the Lord's Table, as we're going to do on New Year's Eve. And what a blessing it will be! We are going to have a feast. We're going to have a celebration. We're going to feed upon the Lamb, because the Apostle Paul said, *"I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament"—that is, "the new covenant"—"in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."* (1 Corinthians 11:23–25) And, folks, *when we share the Lord's Supper, we don't come to mourn a corpse; we come to hail a conqueror.*

### **III. The Lamb in Victory**

Now there's something else I want you to see: Not only the Lamb in prophecy, and not only the Lamb in history, but I want you to see the Lamb in victory. Would you take God's Word and turn to Revelation chapter 5 with me for a moment? Revelation chapter 5—the Lamb in prophecy and the Lamb in history is now the Lamb in victory. Read the first seven verses of Revelation chapter 5. The Apostle John is caught up into heaven. He has a glimpse into glory. He sees the throne of God. And notice: *"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld..."*—now, notice he's looking for a lion—"And I

*beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.”* (Revelation 5:1–7)

Pay attention now for just a moment as we think about the Lamb in victory. This seven-sealed book is the title deed to the earth and the heavens and the netherworld. It represents the right to rule. John the Apostle sees this book, and he sees that there is no one who has the secret; there is no one who can break the seals; there is no one who can open the book. No angels in heaven above can open the book. There is a search sent out throughout all of the earth—and no politician, no religionist, no artist, no scientist, no philosopher, no military genius is able to open the book. There is a search made in the netherworld of hell—and there is no demon, no power of Satan, that can open the book. John is about to weep because, he says, history is going to come to an untimely end. But the angel says, “John, don’t weep. Behold, the Lion-King! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” (Revelation 5:5) And if you’re here this morning with a broken heart, I want to say the same thing to you: Don’t weep! Behold Him! Put your eyes upon the Lord Jesus!

And John turns to see the Lion, and he sees the Lamb. And I want you to see Mary’s Lamb that he saw.

#### **A. He Saw a Small Lamb**

He saw a small Lamb. Look, if you will, in verse 6 of this chapter, and he says, *“In the midst...of the four beasts...stood a Lamb.”* (Revelation 5:6) This is not the ordinary word for lamb. It means “a little lamb.” It means “pet lamb.” It means “baby lamb.” Remember they were to take a lamb, the firstling of the flock, and they were to keep it up for four days? It has the idea of a little household pet. It’s the same word that Jesus used to John when He said, *“Feed my lambs.”* (John 21:15) Here is a small Lamb, a little Lamb. Over here is Satan, the serpent. Over here is Antichrist, the beast. Over here is the little Lamb. Mary had a little Lamb, a small Lamb.

#### **B. He Saw a Slain Lamb**

But now, wait a minute. John also saw a slain Lamb. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“And in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.”* (Revelation 5:6) This Lamb still bears the marks of the nails, and He will forever bear the marks of the nails. And when I go to heaven, I’ll see the nail prints in His hand. These are the souvenirs of earth, the emblems of redemption that He bears forever.

#### **C. He Saw a Standing Lamb**

A small Lamb. A slain Lamb. But a standing Lamb. Notice there *“stood a Lamb.”* He laid down in death in a grave, but the grave could not hold Him, and He is now standing,

making intercession for us. It speaks of the resurrection of the Lamb.

#### **D. He Saw a Strong Lamb**

And then he sees a strong Lamb. Notice as it is: He has seven horns. Horns in the Bible are emblematic of power. An animal would take his horns to ram and to butt and to gore and to fight. Notice the conquest. He's a little Lamb. But don't miss the horns. He has seven horns. Seven is the emblem of perfect power. He is, friend, a standing Lamb. He is a strong Lamb.

#### **E. He Saw a Searching Lamb**

He is a searching lamb. He is full of eyes. That speaks of intelligence, omniscience. He is omnipotent. He is omniscient. He is the searching Lamb. He knows what you're thinking this very moment. He sees every move that you make.

#### **F. He Saw a Sovereign Lamb**

And He is the sovereign Lamb. Look, if you will, in verse 7 of this same thing: "*And he came*"—the Lamb came—"*and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.*" (Revelation 5:7) He and He alone, Mary's little Lamb, is the secret of history. He is the mystery of history. If you were to ask Him, "By what right do you have to take that book?" He would say, "I have this right: I have the right of creation. I made it all. And then, I have the right of Calvary. I died. I shed my blood for it. And I have the right of conquest. I was raised from the dead, and I have the right to take this book and to open it. For I am the great I AM." And I AM was born a lamb. Mary's Lamb was sovereign God.

### **IV. The Lamb in Majesty**

And one last thing—and very quickly: You've seen the Lamb in prophecy; you've seen the Lamb in history; you've seen the Lamb in victory; but now see the Lamb in majesty. Chapter 5 and verse 8—look at it: "*And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours,*"—that's incense—"*which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beats and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and power, and blessing.*" (Revelation 5:8–12)

## Conclusion

Mary had a little Lamb. His fleece was white as snow. And I know that you'd like to join me this Christmas season to say, "Worthy is the Lamb—exclusively worthy, exceedingly worthy, eternally worthy." 

# Christ the Lord

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 23, 1990

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 2:8–11

*“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

LUKE 2:11

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Confessing Christ as Lord Seals Salvation
- II. Confessing Christ as Lord Silences Satan
- III. Confessing Christ as Lord Strengthens Saints
- IV. Confessing Christ as Lord Saves Sinners
- V. Confessing Christ as Lord Simplifies Service

Conclusion

## Introduction

Second chapter of Luke, in verse eight. The title of my message this morning is simply this: “Christ the Lord.” I think if you were to say to me, Adrian I’m going to cut out your tongue, and before you have your tongue cut out, is there anything that you’d like to say. Remember you can only say one sentence. You know what I think I’d want to say? Jesus Christ is Lord. That’s what I think I’d want to say. If I had only one sentence that I could speak the rest of my life, it would be this that Jesus Christ is L-o-r-d—Lord. Read with me now beginning in verse eight, “and there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night and lo the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shown round about them and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” Christ the Lord. And in that verse we see two things. First of all we see the Christmas provision and then we see the Christmas profession. What is the Christmas provision? A Savior—a Savior. It has well been said if our greatest need had been information, God would have sent an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent an economist. But my dear friend, our greatest need was salvation and forgiveness and God sent a savior. That’s the Christmas provision: unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior.

But now listen to the Christmas profession, which is, Christ the Lord. May I ask you some questions this morning, very personal ones? Nod your head, Thank you. All right. The first question I want to ask you today: Do you believe in His Lordship? Now I dare say that most people would say, yes, yes, yes, I believe in His Lordship and I don't think we'd get much argument here today in this place about that question. So, let me hasten on to the second question. Have you crowned Him Lord?

Now don't answer that lightly or carelessly. Have you crowned Him Lord? When I say that I mean is He Lord of all that you are, all that you have, all that you do? Is He? Are you thinking? Don't let this just go over your head. Is he the Lord of your tongue? Is He the Lord of your thoughts? Is He the Lord of your time? Is He the Lord of your temper? Is He Lord of your treasure? He is a Savior, but that Savior is Christ the Lord. It's one thing to sing, "Bring Forth a Royal Diadem and Crown Him Lord of all." It's quite another to live it out in our lives. All right? You say, yes, Pastor, I believe He is Lord. Yes Pastor, I have crowned the Christ of Christmas Lord, Christ the Lord.

May I ask you yet now a third question. Are you gladly, freely, openly confessing Him as Christ the Lord? Listen to verse ten, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not for I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." God wants this message known around the world. Now, may I say, as we talk about the Lordship of Jesus, that this is what separates crowds at Christmas. Anybody can be sentimental about a baby. I mean the little baby born in a manger, you can take an old atheist and he'll get sentimental about the sweet little Jesus boy. That's not what I'm talking about. Thank God He was the sweet little Jesus boy, but the Bible says, "unto you is born a savior which is Christ the Lord." And the same silly crowd who will be standing around the manger, in a few days, New Years Day, will be drunk singing Auld Lang Syne. They don't believe that Jesus is the Lord.

I'll tell you, dear friend, in Bible times, when they said Jesus is the Lord, it meant something. For a Jew to say that Jesus was Lord. Do you know what that meant, that meant that he was coequal, coeternal with God the Father, for a Jew to say that He is Lord. You see, in the Old Testament, the name Lord is really Jehovah. It's translated over seven thousand times, in our Bible, Lord, but it is Jehovah. A Jew, a pious Jew, if he were reading the Scripture, when he came to that word Lord, he wouldn't even pronounce it with audible terms. He would simply close his eyes and bow his head and worship. They didn't have printing presses, and if he were writing the Scripture out, if he were a Scribe, when he came to that word Lord, he would lay down the pen and get a brand new pen just to write that word. That's the one that was born on Christmas day. "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

And oh for a Gentile to say that He was Lord. You have to remember, dear friend, that in this day not only was Caesar the emperor—he was their God. And it was

demanded that they confess that Caesar is Lord. And these Christians at the pain of persecution, and perhaps martyrdom, death would say no Caesar is not Lord, Jesus is Lord. I wonder, is He your Lord in that way? Do you see Him as God of very God. Do you see Him as Lord to such a way that no matter what the cost, you will confess Him as Lord? Do you?

Vernon Grounds wrote these words: "It is amazing therefore to consider what the followers of a certain homeless, jobless, penniless carpenter did. They took the loftiest title in their culture and ascribed it to their ignominious leader who had died in shame as a condemned criminal on a Roman cross. They went everywhere defying Caesar's lordship in order to proclaim the Lordship of their discredited master. They did this at the risk of death and the possibility of martyrdom."

We read in Acts chapter two, verse thirty-six the preaching of the Apostles, "therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ." This Christmas, can you say it? Will you mean it from your heart? Love so amazing so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all. Now I want to remind you when you say that it is not Christ—And. You never add anything to Jesus. He's Alpha and Omega. That means He's the beginning and the end. It's never Christ—And, it's always Christ—Or. Christ—Or Caesar, Christ—Or self, Christ—or the world. He must be first and He must be foremost. He does not want a place in your life. He does not want prominence in your life. He deserves and demands preeminence in your life. He is Lord. Now the questions are getting a little tougher. First of all do you believe in His Lordship? Yes I do. Have you crowned Him Lord of your life? Oh, yes I have Pastor. Well then, are you openly, publicly professing Christ as your Lord, even if it costs?

I was reading recently of a young lawyer who was called into the service, the military service, he had to leave his law profession. And so he was auctioning off his office furniture and he put up a sign, he said everything must go, including myself. Have you done that? Here Lord, I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do.

Now when you begin to profess Christ, I mean truly, openly, publicly, gladly, boldly, confess Christ, I want to mention about five things it'll do. Okay? Things that will radically, dramatically change your life and make you count for God. Not only are you saying I believe He is Lord, not only are you saying I crown Him as Lord, but I confess Him as Lord.

## **I. Confessing Christ as Lord Seals Salvation**

The very first thing it'll do, it'll seal your salvation. It will seal your salvation. You see, my dear friend, if you're not willing to openly, publicly, gladly confess Christ as Lord, don't try to convince me that you're saved. You might tease yourself, but the Bible says

clearly and plainly in Romans chapter ten, verses nine and ten that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." If He's not your Lord, He's not your Savior.

Today, we hear so much silly talk about, Oh now that you've accepted Christ as your Savior, why not make Him your Lord? May I tell you clearly and plainly if Jesus Christ is not your Lord, He is not your Savior. Do you understand that? When you say that Jesus Christ must be Lord in order for Him to be your savior, that's a works salvation. Oh no, it is not, my dear friend. You are saved by grace through faith. You trust God to save you by what the Lord Jesus did, but the Bible says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. I cannot work my soul to save that work my Lord has done. But I will work like any slave for the love of God's dear Son. He is Lord.

I was talking to a young preacher boy in my study here this past week and he was telling me of something he had read in a book, how a person had taken what Jesus said to a dying thief and made it more real and put it in the vernacular today. And this young boy was preaching in a jail service and he thought he would use it. So he told those prisoners, when Jesus Christ was on that cross, there was a criminal next to Him, and of course he was talking to criminals, and that criminal turned to Jesus, wanting mercy, and the criminal said to Jesus, when you get to your kingdom, put in a good word for me. Now that's the way he put it in the vernacular. And Jesus turned to him and said, consider it done. When you get there put in a good word for me, and Jesus said, consider it done. That preacher boy told me that Pastor, when I said that, those prisoners began to applaud. They just began to clap because every one of them saw themselves as hopeless. And my dear friend, when you call upon Jesus and say, Lord save me, Lord remember me, He says to you, consider it done. Consider it done. It is salvation by grace through faith, immediately, totally, He saves you, but, my dear friend, if you're not committed to His Lordship, He does not save you.

I think one of the greatest preachers that ever lived was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. May I read to you what Spurgeon said, and I want you to listen as intensely as you can. He said, "If the convert declares that he knows the Lord's will, but doesn't mean to attend to it, it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved." Did you hear that? Those of you who are living double lives thinking you're going to heaven. Listen again to what Spurgeon said, "If the convert declares that he knows the Lord's will but doesn't mean to attend to it, it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Don't imagine that the gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to worldlings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment simply by accepting Christ as their savior while they are wedded to their idols and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so, I tell them a lie, I pervert the gospel, I insult Christ, and I turn the grace of God into lasciviousness." Well said. You see, friend, we cannot have a "come in, Savior" and a "stay out, Lord"

salvation. The Bible says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The late, great Dr. Vance Havner said that salvation is not a cafeteria line where we'll say, I'll have a little savior-hood today, but no lordship, thank you. He is the Lord Jesus Christ: "unto you is born this day, in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord." Did you know that He is called Savior only twenty-four times in the New Testament? He is called Lord four hundred and thirty-three times.

## **II. Confessing Christ as Lord Silences Satan**

Now this confession of Christ as Lord, what does it do? Well number one, it just seals salvation. I'll tell you what else it does: it silences Satan. Oh ho, how Satan hopes that you will not learn to confess it and believe it that Christ is Lord. What is the confession of the New Testament church? Jesus Christ is Lord.

Put this verse in your margin, Revelation chapter twelve and verse eleven, "and they overcame him," that is the devil, "by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." What is the word of our testimony? That same sentence that I said, it would be my last sentence, if I only had one more sentence to speak. And it is this that Jesus Christ is Lord. Oh my dear friend, Satan is terrified by testimony. Satan is conquered by confession. When you take the name of Jesus Christ, boldly, gladly and fling it in the face of Satan, he cowers at those words, that Jesus Christ is Lord. I have done battle with demons; I mean I have. I don't talk about it that much, but I've been on my knees, I've been in warfare fighting demons and demon-possessed people. And I have come to see, I have come to see so clearly, so plainly, the power of that statement that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Sitting out here today is one of the greatest football players in this century. His name is John Bramlett, but he's a greater Christian than he was a football player. John got saved and he got saved good. I was with John shortly after he was saved. I was at a Memphis State football game, I hardly knew him, he hardly knew me. He knew who I was. I saw him there at the gate, I think it was gate four and I talked to him, wanted to encourage this young babe in Christ to stand up for Jesus. About that time, four men came up, about John's age and looked to me like four bottles of liquor. The game had not even started and they already had a glow on them. And they said, Bramlett, how you doing, John? Holding up those bottles of Hootch. I watched this young Christian, he turned to those four, he said, did I tell you what Jesus has done for me? I felt the power of God come into that place and I said, thank God for a man, not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I saw Satan's forces melt at the name of Jesus, at the name of Jesus. Oh my dear friend, it silences Satan. Satan does not want you to understand the power of that testimony. Confession and conquest are limited.

I want you as a Christian this Christmas season to continue to confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord. Tell Him, Lord, I belong to you. Tell others, He is Lord. Tell others that you belong to Jesus. Keep it on your lips, "unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord."

### **III. Confessing Christ as Lord Strengthens Saints**

And not only does it seal salvation, and not only does it silence Satan, I'll tell you what else it does, my dear friend, hii, it strengthens saints. It strengthens saints. You want to be a strong Christian? Begin to confess openly, verbally, that Jesus Christ is Lord. You see, if you want your faith to be strong, put your faith in your mouth. And begin to articulate it. Let's your soul make her boast in the Lord. And you'll find that your faith will begin to grow, the more you assert a thing, the stronger power it holds in your own life. It will increase your love for Jesus because, my dear friend, when you confess the Lord Jesus Christ it'll cost you. And whatever we sacrifice for, we tend to love. It'll cause you to be a separated Christian when you start confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, because the worldly crowd, the worldly crowd will turn on you when you confess Christ as Lord. As a matter of fact, you can tell whether or not you're getting worldly, if you fail to want to openly and publicly confess Jesus Christ as Lord, but my friend, this is good tidings which should be to all people.

### **IV. Confessing Christ as Lord Saves Sinners**

I'll tell you a third thing it'll do. Not only will it seal salvation, not only will it silence Satan, not only will it strengthen saints, but oh my dear friend, it'll save sinners. It will save sinners. Now we can't all be preachers, but we can all be reachers. We can all be testifiers. We go in and out among people so much, oh my dear friend, wouldn't it be wonderful if everybody in this congregation knew how to go out in this community tomorrow and say Jesus is Lord. You say, that seems so hard. Yes, but it is so necessary, so needful. My dear friend, these are good tidings of great joy. This is the Christmas confession. Oh I know what you say, you say, well pastor, that's a very personal thing, so I've got it figured out, I just want them to see my life And when they see my life, that'll cause them to want to be saved. May I tell you, that's consummate arrogance. They're not saved by your life; they are saved by His death. And if you do happen to live a good life, the only way that you've been able to live it is Jesus Christ has been living it in you. And if you take the praise without giving Him the glory, you're taking that praise under false pretenses. No, my dear friend, there are people who are lost and they need to know the way. And these are good tidings unto all people, "unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord." How shall they know, if we don't tell them? Oh we need to get bold.

You know, what has happened in Romania, that great revival in Romania, in

Ceausescu has been overthrown. You say, that was a political revival. Oh, no those like our own Dave Ripley have come back and told us what happened. It wasn't a political revolution. It was a spiritual revival. It started with a Baptist preacher, a Baptist preacher. He had been told, you can't say this. You can't preach this. You can't speak of Jesus here. You can't teach the boys and girls, you can't you can't you can't. One day, got on his knees and prayed and God said, be bold. He said, I will. He called some other preachers around about three or four of them and said, we've had enough. Live or die, sink or swim, we're going for God. And he began to preach it and teach it, Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord. The communists came, they came to his house, the soldiers came there, the strong arms came there and they said, we are going to arrest this man. We're going to put him in prison. But you know what happened? My dear friend, when he stood there, unflinching, full of courage, his church members came and stood between the soldiers and their pastor. And they said, if you get him, you're going to have to get us first. And then other people came and other people came and other people, first dozens and then hundreds and then thousands and they began to shout, there is a God! There is a God! There is a God! There is a God! God's people, no longer intimidated, began to give that glad Christmas confession: Jesus Christ is Lord.

My dear friend, it saves sinners. Many are being swept into the Kingdom of Heaven in Romania now because of that confession.

## **V. Confessing Christ as Lord Simplifies Service**

I'll tell you what else it does, not only does it save sinners it simplifies service. It simplifies service. You know, if you want to get your life simplified, just ask the two questions that ole Paul asked on the road to Damascus when he met Jesus. Question number one: Who are you, Lord? Question number two: What would you have me to do? You can ask: What would others have me to do? Who are you Lord? Lord, what would you have me to do?

May I tell you, dear friend, the greatest advice that anybody ever gave anybody on the face of this earth was the advice that Mary gave to the servants that day at the wedding feast before Jesus turned the water into wine, when Mary said to those servants, concerning her Son Jesus, "Whatever he saith unto you do it." That's good advice. Oh how that simplifies things. It simplifies service. It just gets it down to where you don't have to go through a lot of questions. You just simply say, Lord what do you want me to do.

I heard of a young preacher, he was called to a church. There were several hundred members of that church and that church had been known for its divisions. And so one of the ladies in the church came to this young preacher, and she said, "Oh," said, "you're going to have a very difficult job here." And he said, "And why is that." "Oh," she said,

"it'll be difficult for you to please several hundred of us." "Oh," he said, "Madame, I shall not be trying to please several hundred of you. I shall be trying to please one, my Lord. And if I please Him, that ought to be good enough for you." You see how it simplifies things? You see, dear friend, if we please God, it doesn't matter whom we displease. And if we displease God, it doesn't matter whom we please. And how can we please God? There is but one way to please God, to say it and mean it without stutter, stammer or equivocation, Jesus Christ is Lord. It simplifies service.

Dr. David Livingston was one of the greatest missionaries who ever lived, an erudite, cultured, God fearing, Christ-honoring man, who left culture and pleasure and home and wealth, went down to Africa to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the heart of darkest Africa. David Livingston had stayed in Africa weeks, months, years, they didn't even know whether he was still alive or not. They didn't know what had happened to him. A newspaper commissioned H. M. Stanley to go down into Africa and see if he could find David Livingston. Stanley didn't even know where to start. He went to Africa, began to ask questions, got an expedition, deeper, and deeper, and deeper into the heart of Africa he went until that one day, you remember by not happenstance, I believe, but by providence Stanley and Livingston met and those immortal words where Stanley, in order to break the ice, put out his hand, when he saw this missionary and said, "Dr. Livingston, I presume." Out there in the jungles. And these two men met and they became fast friends and close friends. The time for Stanley to go back to civilization, he said to David Livingston, "Dr. Livingston, you've done a good job here in Africa, but you're sick, I want you to come home." He said, "your books, you may not realize it, but your books have sold so many copies that you're a wealthy man. You can come back home to wealth. And you can come back home to the accolades that you deserve. And besides that, now Livingston, we have some doctors and some medicine that can deal with this jungle fever that you have. You're getting old. It's time for you to come back to England. Come back to your people. Come back and share and tell us what God has done here in Africa." Livingston excused himself and said, "I must pray." He went into his tent that night and spent the night in prayer and then he told Stanley, "I cannot go. I promised God I would serve Him here and I promised God that I would die here." Stanley shook the hand of his friend Livingston and turned and got on that steamer boat as it steamed away. Livingston waved at him as he went back to civilization. This was David Livingston's last contact with the civilized world. The old missionary went back to his little fire and he took out his diary and he wrote these words that you can read in David Livingston's diary, he said this, "My Jesus, my King, my life, my all, I again dedicate the entirety of my life to thee." And he stayed there and he died there and they came and got his body and carried his body back to England and gave it a burial, but before they could, the Africans took the body of David Livingston and cut the heart out

and buried his heart in Africa. Because they said, his body may belong to England, but his heart belongs to Africa. But England and Africa were wrong—his heart belonged to Jesus. His heart belonged to Jesus.

You see, it simplifies service, somebody says, "do this," or "do that," "come here," or "go there." My dear friend, you need to ask yourself this question, I want to ask you not as a missionary, but as a twentieth century businessman, Is Jesus Christ Lord of your life? What right do you have to call yourself a Christian if He's not? The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is," what? "Christ the Lord."

## **Conclusion**

Now my dear friend, as I close, may I tell you this, the question is not will you acknowledge Christ as Lord, the question is when will you acknowledge Christ as Lord. Are you listening? The Bible tells us clearly in Philippians chapter two verses nine and ten concerning Jesus, "wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

It's not a matter of if, only when. If you'll confess Him as Lord now, He'll confess you as saved and as His child. But if you'll deny Him, he'll deny you and if you don't meet Him in salvation, you'll meet Him in judgment, but one day, you'll bow the knee to the babe who was born in Bethlehem. "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord."

Let's bow our heads. Question number one: Do you believe He is Lord? Question number two: Have you crowned Him Lord of your life? Question number three: Have you and are you confessing Him as your Lord? Are you? Father, I pray today, that many even in this building will confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father. For we pray in His wonderful name. Amen.

# He Is Lord

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 25, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 2:11**

## Outline

Introduction

I. There Must Be a Settled Conviction

II. There Must Be a Steadfast Confession

III. There Will Be a Christmas Consolation

Conclusion

## Introduction

We've been in Luke chapter two for this Christmas season, and I want you to look today in verse eleven. Here's the announcement of the angels to the shepherds. For unto is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. We're thinking today on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The title of our Christmas message "He is Lord."

I want to ask you two questions. Question number one. Do you believe in the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Answer. Yes you do. You wouldn't be here this morning. You in a general way I think everybody here from wall to wall, floor to ceiling would say yes, yes, sure. He is Lord. Now may I ask you the second question? Is He your Lord? I didn't ask do you assent intellectually to the fact that He is Lord. Is He Lord? Hey, let me sharpen the focus. Is He Lord of your tongue? Is He Lord of your thoughts? Is He Lord of your time? Is He Lord of your treasure? You know it's one thing to sing bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all. It's quite another to live it out in our daily lives and all of this singing about Christmas is vain, vapid, hypocrisy unless we say what the shepherds said. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Say it with me. Christ the Lord. Christ the Lord. Let's say it one more time. Christ the Lord. Now I want you to give the confession of the early church. Are you ready for it? I'm going to say it and I want you to repeat it. He is Lord. He is Lord. He is Lord. He is Lord. One more time. He is Lord. He is Lord. May God burn that into your heart, X that upon your consciousness this Christmas morning. As we've said before, the giddy crowd can dance around the manger. We can sing Away in a Manger and O Little Town of Bethlehem, but the authentic Christmas confession is this, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

Do you know every so often, somebody will say now that you've received Jesus

Christ as your Savior why not make Him your Lord? And somebody says well you know I believe I'm going to make Christ Lord. Well you're too late. He's already Lord. You can't make Him Lord. The Bible says in Acts chapter two, verse thirty-six: Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ. Heaven has already declared He's Lord. You can't make Him Lord. The question today is not will you make Him Lord. He is Lord. The question today in exactitude is, will you yield to His Lordship? Now that's an easy question to give mental assent to; easily uttered and soon forgotten. But before the message has finished this morning, I pray it will be a disturbing question and then a delightful question. Is He the Lord of your life? I have three for you this morning.

## **I. There Must Be a Settled Conviction**

First of all there must be a settled conviction that He is Lord. Look again in verse eleven. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. Now those angels said that to some Jewish shepherds. Now can you imagine what it would mean for a shepherd to look at a little bundle of humanity, a little pink rosy skinned baby with dimpled feet lying on straw, and say He is Lord? Because to the Jews of that day, the word Lord is equated with Jehovah. Jehovah is translated Lord in the King James Version of the Bible in the Old Testament, Jehovah over 7,000 times. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a baby who is Jehovah, Messiah, Jehovah. Ha can you imagine to a Jew to say that God had come in the flesh? This word Jehovah was so awesome to the Jews that many of the most pious Jews would not even speak the word audibly. If an Old Testament scribe were writing the Old Testament Scriptures, when he came to the word Jehovah, Lord, he would throw away that pen and get a brand new pen just to write the name. And each time when the word was mentioned, or the word was there in the Scriptures he would bow his head and pray and worship the Almighty. And now these shepherds are saying there He is, God in a manger; Christ the Lord. What courage it would have taken for a Jew of that day to confess Christ as Lord, because he would be accused of heresy.

And what about a gentile? For a gentile to say that Christ is Lord meant that Caesar was not Lord. Not only would he have to admit that Jesus Christ is God, but he would have to admit that Caesar was not god. Now the Roman Emperor had to be confessed as god in that day. That's what kept the Roman Empire together. They had said hail Caesar. The word Caesar literally means lord, Curios, lord. And all of the people in the Roman Empire were to say that Caesar is Lord. But for somebody in Jesus' day to say that Christ would mean not only is Christ God not only is He my Lord, but Caesar is not my lord. And if you said that, you'd better be prepared to back it up with your life. Today,

today if you had to pay with your life to say Jesus Christ is Lord, would you do it? Now don't answer that easily. Don't answer that easily. But if walking out of this building today there was some sort of a Roman guard that said, you folks here are worshipping illegally, and under pain of death I'm going to ask you this question. Will you now renounce Christianity? Will you refuse to say that Christ is Lord? Will you say that Caesar is lord? Answer carefully, because the way you answer may determine whether or not you will be food for lions in the coliseum. They would say to those early Christians, "Say it. Caesar Curios. They would say, "No, Christos Curios. I want you to see those Christians in that Roman coliseum. Up there in the coliseum is the Emperor in his velvet box. The coliseum is filled with 30-, 40-, 50,000 people. At one end of the coliseum is a cage of ravenous, half starved maniacal lions. Over here in the other end is a little group of Christians. Here's a mother holding her baby. Here are her other two children, clinging to her skirts. Here's a grandfather. Here's a stalwart young man. Here's a beautiful young girl, not yet married. A little group of Christians; what is their crime? They would say Christ is Lord, not Caesar. Christ is Lord. I want you to hear the crowds as they begin to chant: bring out the lions, bring out the lions, bring out the lions. The trap is sprung, and those ferocious creatures come and those Christians are looking up into heaven and they're singing. I don't what they're singing, because we don't have their songs. But history tells us they sang. If they had been like us, they would have been singing He is Lord. He is Lord. He is risen from the dead, and He is Lord. I want you to see the apostle Paul; that grizzled old warrior who had lived all of his life for the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they had shipwrecked in the Mediterranean, who had been beaten, who had been left for dead, whom they had stoned, whom they had starved. Finally they take him, open the prison door, and say, Paul, come now, it is time for your execution. Paul is just humming a little song and the and the guard says, "Paul maybe you didn't understand me. I said it's time for your execution. I hear you humming." And he said well yes a little song I just love to sing it's just, well, what's the tune? What's the name of it, Paul? Oh it's just a little thing called, He is Lord. He is Lord. He is risen from the dead and He is Lord. Paul put your neck there on that block. There's the executioner. He has that lethal axe. There's the basket ready to receive his head. There's the river Tiber, ready to receive his blood. We always give a condemned prisoner a chance to say one last thing. Sir what do you want to say? Oh I don't have to think about it. Christ is Lord. Christ is Lord. It cost in that day for a Jew to say Christ was Lord. They accused him of blasphemy. It cost in that day for a gentile to say Christ is Lord. They accused him of treason. And it will cost you today, if you really say it and mean it. Because you see, it is not Christ and. It is Christ or. You don't add anything to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Alpha and Omega. He's the beginning and the end. It's

Christ or, not Christ after; not Lord let me bury my father and then after that I'll come and follow you. Jesus Christ said, if you don't put Me first, you're not worthy of Me. The Bible says in Acts chapter, excuse me. In Matthew chapter six in verse thirty-three, we're to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

I talked to you about the apostle Paul just a few moments ago. Do you know what radically and dramatically and eternally changed the life of the apostle Paul? That baby that was born at Bethlehem, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, was buried, raised again the third day; the apostle Paul did not believe all of that. As a matter of fact, he hated the church. He hated Christ. He hated preachers. He hated evangelism. He hated missions. He was doing all he could do to stop it until he met the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road. And Paul asked the two greatest questions that anybody could ever ask. Question number one. Who are you, Lord? Question number two. What will you have me to do? Those are the two greatest questions anybody could ask. Who are you, Lord? I mean God show Yourself to me. Reveal Yourself to me. Teach me about You. Who are you, Lord? And Paul spent the rest of his life learning the answer to those two questions: who Jesus Christ is, and what Jesus Christ would have him to do.

Now have you, have you this Christmas morning that you want to know Him and do what He would have you do? If you do, it costs and pays. I was reading about a young lawyer who was drafted back in World War II and he had to, he was closing his law office. And so he put up a sign as he was auctioning off all of his furniture and this is what the sign said: Now remember he's going off to war. There's all of his furniture and here's the sign. It says, "Everything must go including myself." And that's the way it is, friend, when you come to Jesus Christ. It 's not Christ it's not Christ and. It is not Christ after. It is Christ or: Christ or self, Christ or the world, Christ or Caesar, but not Christ and. You don't Him to. It's just Jesus. He is Lord.

## **II. There Must Be a Steadfast Confession**

Now do you have that conviction? If you don't have that conviction, you're going to be a sorry Christian if you're a Christian at all and I doubt you'd be one at all. Here's the second thing. Not only should there be, friend, an absolute settled conviction but there must be the steadfast confession of His Lordship. Now go back to chapter two and look in verse fifteen. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it—now watch it—they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. Now what was the saying that was told them? He is

Lord. What did they do when they left? They went everywhere making known the saying of the angels. What was the saying of the angels? He is Lord. Everywhere they went, they went saying He is Lord. The Christmas conviction is He is Lord. The Christmas confession is He is Lord. I mean everywhere they went confessing Him as Lord.

Now I asked you a question. Do you believe in His Lordship? You said yes. I asked you another question. Are you living under His Lordship? I hope you said yes. I want to ask you another question. Are you confessing Him as Lord, I mean openly, boldly, unashamedly, without stutter, without stammer, without fear, without apology? Are you saying it gloriously, gladly, steadfastly He is Lord? Just think what would happen if the thousands of us who are here this morning in this building would just go out through this city and make known the fact that Christ is Lord without fear that He's Lord regardless what it might cost. He is Lord. You see, the shepherd said let's come and see. Let's go and tell. That's the whole Bible. Come and see. Go tell. That's it. That's it. Find who He is, and then tell others who He is.

Let me tell you five things that confession will do for you. If you today will begin to confess what the angels told the shepherds; if you will confess His Lordship, let me tell you how it would change your life. Number one. Confession shows salvation. Confession of His Lordship shows that you're saved. Put this verse in your margin: Roman ten verses nine and ten: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus—literally the Greek, Jesus Lord—that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Don't tell me that you're saved if you refuse to confess Jesus Christ openly and publicly. Don't tell me that. The Bible clearly says, Jesus Christ plainly says if you are ashamed of Me before men, I'll be ashamed of you before My Father in heaven. Jesus said if you will confess Me before men, I will confess you before My Father. Now if He's not your Lord and you're unwilling to confess Him as your Lord, don't count on Him as being your Savior.

You see. Some people have the idea that salvation is a cafeteria line where we say well I'll have a little Saviorhood today, please, but no Lordship. Thank you. No, no. Somehow people have said well that you can trust Christ as your Savior without making Him your Lord. That's impossible. That is thou shalt confess thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Now salvation is by grace, not of works of any kind but it is the Lord that we trust in. It the Savior is Christ, the Lord. That's what the angels said. Do you know who I believe the greatest preacher who ever lived was, outside the apostle Paul? I believe he was a Baptist preacher named Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He lived in another century, but I want you to hear what Mr. Spurgeon said about this matter of salvation and the

Lordship of Christ, and I quote. “If the convert declares that he knows the Lord’s will but doesn’t mean to attend to it, it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved.” Hello. Listen. Listen. There are a lot of people in this auditorium, according to Spurgeon, who are going to hell whose names are on the role of this church or some other church. “If the convert declares that he knows the Lord’s will but doesn’t mean to attend to it, it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved.” Don’t imagine that the gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to worldlings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment, simply by accepting Christ as their Savior while they are wedded to their idols and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so I tell them a lie. I pervert the Gospel. I insult Christ. I turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. You cannot have a come in Savior and stay out Lordship type of salvation, friend.

What does that confession as Christ as Lord do? Well number one. It seals salvation. I’ll tell you what else it does. When we begin to say it and mean it, Christ is Lord not only does it seal salvation but friend it subdues Satan. It subdues Satan. Now you know. Satan is very real. You have an enemy—a malevolent, hateful enemy. And he has made plans to sabotage your life in 1995, and the only thing that he fears, not your good intentions, not your ingenuity, not your New Year’s resolutions, but friend, he fears the fact that Christ is Lord. Now when you take the Christ is Lord, say it and mean; at that moment you gain you gain incredible power over Satan. Revelation chapter 12 and verse eleven speaks of how the early Christians overcame Satan and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb by the word of their testimony and loved not their lives unto their death. What was the word of their testimony? Christ is Lord. That was the authentic testimony of the New Testament church. And when they met Satan, when they met any demonic activity, when they met any unusual temptation, they could say it and mean it. Christ is Lord. Now what that does, it reminds Satan of his defeat. Do you know why Christmas? Let me give you a verse that gives you why Christmas. It’s Hebrews chapter two verse fourteen. For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood... He’s talking about us and calling us children. We live in bodies of flesh and blood. He also Himself likewise took part of the same... Who is He also? Jesus. We’re flesh and blood. He became flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Jesus came on Christmas morning as Lord in flesh to destroy Satan. Now when Satan gets on your case, you need to clearly, boldly, unashamedly declare the Lordship of Christ, because it seals salvation and it subdues Satan.

We have a member of our church who is a member of our church, and an itinerate evangelist. His name is John Bramlett. Now John Bramlett wasn’t afraid of anything that moved on a football field. I mean if you were here in the days when John Bramlett

played at Memphis State University, or saw John Bramlett as he played in professional football, you will know that he was a terror to the opposition; incredibly bold and a stellar athlete. John Bramlett was also one who abused his family, who drank alcohol, who fought, who gambled, who cursed, who swore, who blasphemed, until God got hold of John Bramlett and God saved John Bramlett. I met John Bramlett about twenty-one years ago at a football game, a Memphis Stat football game. He had just been saved and he was full of Jesus. And we were standing there by gate number four about to go in. I saw him. I thought it'd be good to go encourage the young baby fearful Christian. So I was there, standing and talking to him a little bit. And about four or five of his old football-playing buddies came up. They didn't know he had been saved. And they already were about halfway drunk. And they had their whiskey bottles and so forth getting ready to go into the game. And they saw John and they said John Bramlett how you doing Bull? They all gathered around him, and I thought well I hope he doesn't go with that crowd. He just turned around, and he said, "I'm doing fine brother. Did tell you what Jesus did for me? Just like that, I mean bold as a lion. I looked at those men and they began to slink back and friend, listen I knew at that moment that Satan absolutely went crashing down: all the power of Satan, all the temptation of boos, all that old crowd. When that man clearly, boldly, unashamedly said I want to tell you what Jesus has done for me. We need to learn, friend, that, when we confess Him as Lord, it seals salvation. When we confess Him as Lord, it subdues Satan.

You want victory this coming year? Keep saying this, "He is Lord. I belong to Him. He is Lord of all and I'm trusting Him." I'll tell you what else it will do. Not only will it seal salvation, not only will it subdue Satan, friend, it will strengthen saints. You want to be strengthened? I mean do you want to grow this year? There's nothing that will help your faith to grow like confessing that Christ is Lord, just as the shepherds did. Just confess it. Listen. Confession brings possession. Confession of faith strengthens faith and faith strengthens your confession of faith and the thing just reciprocally grows. Just continue daily. Make your boast in the Lord. It will strengthen your faith. It will help you to separate from that old crowd. Are you having difficulty with some left over sins or some hangers on from the old life you used to live? You ought to witness to them, but you ought not to run with them. Let me tell you this. When you get with that old crowd, do what John did. Just tell them whom you belong to. People say when you get saved you ought to get rid of your old friends. You start confessing Christ, they will get rid of you. I mean, just be bold. Now you ought to you ought to at least keep a thread connected to them so you can witness to them, but don't run with them.

I'll tell you what else it does. Not only does it strengthen saints, it saves sinners. You know we can't all be preachers, but we can all be reachers. And every now and then

somebody says well I know that I don't you know I don't tell people about Jesus. I know that. But you know what, Pastor Rogers, I just want them to see my life and when they see my life, I hope that somehow my life will be a testimony to them. May I tell you that is unmitigated pride on your part. They're not saved by your life. They're saved by His death. And if you're living a wonderful life and you don't tell them why then you're taking credit under false pretenses. Who enabled you to live that life? Who gave you the power? Who gave you the glory? Who gave you the strength to live that way? Let them know that He is Lord.

We were in Romania. An entire nation was rescued from the grips of a cruel dictator Ceausescu. There was a little pastor. We went into the church Brother Bob, a church that would not be the size of this choir platform up here. That's, it wouldn't be that, it wouldn't hold this many people. We went into that church. There was a little pastor in that church. His name was Laslo Tokes. The communists said, "Laslo, you're making too much noise. You're not fitting in enough. We're going to deport you. We're going to take you away. He told his congregation, "They're coming for me." The people of that little church in Romania said, "Pastor, we're not going to let them get you." When the communists came, there was a little chondrin of Christians around that church. The communists saw that Laslo Tokes was on the inside and the people were around, and they didn't want to cause a scene lest the people in the west find out what their regime was like. So they just said, well, we'll wait him out. And the people began to pass food into that church and and logs they could burn in the fire to keep themselves warm, and Laslo stayed in the little church in a little apartment there at the church with his family. And the crowd got bigger and the communists began to be get a little bit more vociferous. And they brought their soldiers and they crowd got bigger. Then somebody in the crowd said, "There is a God." And somebody else said, "There is a God." Somebody else said, "There is a God." Somebody else said, "He is Lord. He is Lord. He is Lord." And the crowds got bigger and bigger. They brought in a water cannon and those people bare handedly took that water cannon like a tank and destroyed that thing. It's not meant to be destroyed with bare hands. And then the communists began to shoot. They began to fire bullets and people would stand in front of the guns and say, "Christ is Lord." And those bullets would plunge into their chests. Some of them would unbutton their shirts and say, "He is Lord. Shoot me." The communists began to shoot and the crowds got bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. And on Christmas day they took Ceausescu, that bloody murderer and he was shot. The revolution was on the way. Thousands and thousands and thousands of Romanians had been saved. A nation has been turned back to God by a little hand full of people, not like you folks up there, just about the size of that choir up there, who took a nation and turned it upside

down and inside out and right side up by saying He is Lord.

What would happen if the members of this church were to say it and mean it, I mean at any cost? He is Lord. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. What does it do when you do that? It shows salvation. What does it do? It subdues Satan. What does it do? It strengthens saints. What does it do? It saves sinners, when we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And I'll tell you what else it does. It simplifies service. It simplifies service. I mean, it just it just simplifies things. Now you know life would be simple if it were just a choice between good and bad. Life often is not a choice between good and bad it's a choice between good and best. And many times we don't know what to do. When you just say in any situation Christ is Lord, it is amazing how that will simplify things. Let me give you an illustration. A preacher, young preacher, we've got some preacher boys here today who love Jesus with all their hearts, some godly men today. And I'm grateful to have them in this congregation. But a young preacher came to a church where there were several hundred members and these members had had some dissention among themselves and they were wanting the pastor to pander their pander them and they placate their emotions. And one of the members of the church, a lady in that church came to him and said "Well, Pastor, you're a young man. You're going to have difficulty trying to please several hundred members." Oh, he said. That's not my goal. He said, "My goal is to please Jesus, and if I please Him the rest of you ought to be satisfied; but if not I'm sorry." Don't you like that? See uh. It simplifies things. I mean when when you have a decision to make, all you just simply do, is or all you simply do is to ask what would Jesus have me to do? Do you know the greatest that anybody ever gave in the history of the world? Hmmm, the greatest advice anybody ever gave in I mean you say are certain about certain about it? Well in my humble opinion absolutely. The greatest advice anybody ever gave anyone . . . It was at that wedding the feast of Canaan. And it's what Mary said to the servants at that wedding. She said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." That's it. I mean that is it. Whatever He says to you, do it. It simplifies service. They didn't understand why to fill those water jars that day. That was not their business. Their business was simply, trust and obey.

### **III. There Will Be a Christmas Consolation**

Now here's the third thing. I'll only mention this. I said there must be that Christmas conviction that Christmas confession, and friend there will be that Christmas consolation. Look if you will in verses ten and eleven. And the angel said unto them fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord. Have you

thought that I have been talking to you about things that are rigorous? Do you think that the sermon today has been a downer because I'm saying that Christ is Lord? Friend, this is the best news you have ever heard. It is good tidings of great joy. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

## **Conclusion**

*Our need is not education. He didn't send an educator. Our need is not money. He didn't send an economist. Our need is not health. He didn't send a physician. Our need, friend, is salvation. And He sent a Savior. And that Savior is Christ the Lord.* And my heart today is bursting with joy, because I know Him. I know Him as my Lord and my Savior. And that friend is the meaning of Christmas. Now we're going to sing a song Brother Jamie. I want you to get your hymnals folks and turn to page 82, page 82. And I want us to stand and sing O Come Let Us Adore Him. Let's stand together as we sing it. Page 82.

# His Unblemished Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: Unknown**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 2:25–35**

*“A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”*

LUKE 2:32

## Outline

Introduction

- A. Are You Saved?
- B. Are You Surrendered?
- C. Are You Spiritual?
- D. Are You Sensitive?
- E. Are You Satisfied?
- I. Jesus Is the One Who Brings Deliverance
- II. Jesus Is the One Who Dispels Darkness
- III. Jesus Is the One Who Determines Destiny
- IV. Jesus Is the One Who Provokes Derision
- V. Jesus Is the One Who Causes Division
  - A. Jesus Divides the Human Heart
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  - C. Jesus Divides Churches
- VI. Jesus Is the One Who Reveals Decisions

Conclusion

## Introduction

As the choir is finding their places, would you find yours, please, in the Gospel according to Luke, the second chapter? You know that Luke chapter 1 and 2 is the Christmas story. Today, we're talking about our Lord Jesus Christ and His unblemished life.

Do you remember when you were a child and it was near Christmas? Perhaps the Christmas tree was in the family room, and it was decorated. Maybe your family hung stockings by the chimney and there were presents under the tree, and you could hardly wait 'til Christmas morning. Well, I'm going to give you a story today about a man who was anticipating Christmas. He was waiting for Christmas—the very first Christmas, the very best Christmas ever. His name was Simeon. He was looking. He was waiting. He was longing. He was anticipating the coming of Jesus Christ into this world.

Now, let's look, if we will, in Luke chapter 2, verse 25: *"And, behold"*—do you know what that means, congregation? "Behold"? It means "pay attention"; "listen"—*"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon...the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel"*—that's just another way of saying "waiting for the Messiah"—*"and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ"*—literally, "before he had seen Messiah"—*"And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."* (Luke 2:25–35)

Now, look up here, and let me tell you something: there were many who missed the first coming of Jesus that first Christmas morning because they did not understand or they did not believe the clear Bible prophecies of His first coming in the world. It was clear. It was plain. It was there in the Word of God; and yet, they missed it, either through ignorance or unbelief. Now, that Jesus who came before is coming again, right? He is. You need to be careful lest you miss the Second Coming of Jesus Christ by ignorance or unbelief because the same scriptures that clearly prophesied His first coming, those same scriptures have prophesied His Second Coming. And as His first coming was literally fulfilled, friend, His Second Coming will be literally fulfilled. You need to be ready for Christmas by being ready for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, if you're not ready for His Second Coming, His first coming is certainly is going to be your condemnation. So, I want us to think about how to be ready for Christmas, how to be ready for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, let's just check up right now and see if you're ready. You want to make a list? Are you ready for a checklist? Nod your head. Okay, I want to mention some things that were true about Simeon that surely ought to be true about every man, woman, boy, and girl in this place today if you're ready for Christmas.

### **A. Are You Saved?**

First of all, may I ask you this question: Are you saved? Now, I didn't ask if you were Baptist, Methodist, or a nice person. I didn't ask, do you give to the Red Cross? I didn't ask, are you generous, kind, and compassionate? I said, are you saved? You know,

Jesus came to save His people. *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21) Look now in Luke chapter 2 and verse 25: *“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon...the same man was just.”* (Luke 2:25) He was just. That means he was right with God. We are *“justified by faith.”* (Romans 5:1) You say, “Now, wait a minute. How could Simeon be saved if Jesus had not yet died on the cross? If Jesus is just a little baby, how could this man be a saved man?” The Old Testament saints were saved by looking forward to the coming of Jesus. The Bible teaches that Abraham was justified by faith. Jesus said, *“Abraham...saw [my day], and was glad.”* (John 8:56) We, in this dispensation and time, are saved by looking backward to the death of Christ. But all are looking, whether forward or backward, we’re all looking upward to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you saved? Are you absolutely certain beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure that if Jesus Christ, who came the first time, were to come again this time, are you absolutely certain that you’re saved? Now, my friend, if you don’t go to heaven before you die, you’re not going to go there after you die. If you don’t receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, you’re not ready for Christmas, nor are you ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. All right, first question: Are you saved?

### **B. Are You Surrendered?**

Second question: Are you surrendered? Because this same verse says this man was devout. (Luke 2:25) That’s an adjective we don’t use a whole lot these days. Are you devout? That means do you have a burning, passionate love in your heart for the Lord Jesus Christ? He was *“waiting for the consolation of Israel,”* (Luke 2:25) and that’s why he was devout. You know, the mark that you’re really ready for Jesus to come again is that you’re devout. The Apostle John said when we have this hope in us, we’re going to purify ourselves. (1 John 3:3)

Now, if you’re dabbling in the world, living in sin carelessly, recklessly, you’re not ready for the first coming or the Second Coming. You’re not ready for Christmas. You’re not ready for Jesus Christ to come again. Blessed hope leads to blessed holiness. Would you agree with that? Are you devout? Are you holy? What is the passion of your life? Answer that question: What is the passion of your life? It ought to be the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you saved? Are you surrendered?

### **C. Are You Spiritual?**

Now, let me ask you another question: Are you spiritual? The Bible says there, *“And the Holy Ghost was upon him.”* (Luke 2:25) Is the Holy Ghost upon you? I mean, is your life imbued with the Spirit of Almighty God? Are you filled with the Spirit of God? Now, if you’re saved, you have the Spirit, but does He have you? Can you say that your body is a surrendered vessel? Does He have all of you? That, my friend, is the difference

between sagging and soaring. Here was a man who was spiritual. He was filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

#### **D. Are You Sensitive?**

Next question: Are you sensitive? I asked are you, are you saved? Are you surrendered? Are you spiritual? Are you sensitive? Do you know what the name *Simeon* means? It means “one who hears.” It means “listening one.” Look in verse 26: “*And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.*” (Luke 2:26) Here was a man who was in contact with God, and God could lead him. And the Lord spoke to Simeon specially and said, “Simeon, Simeon, listen. You’re not going to die until you see Messiah.”

Now, here was a man who was hardwired to God through the Holy Spirit of God. Did you know that the same Spirit that led Simeon to the temple so long ago to meet the Lord Jesus and hold Jesus in his arms is the same Holy Spirit who wants to guide you? “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*” (Romans 8:14) And the same Holy Spirit that revealed to Simeon the first coming of Jesus is the Holy Spirit that wants to reveal to you the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you sensitive? Can God speak to you? How about your prayer life? So often in our prayer life we’re telling God these things. We think God is some sort of heavenly Santa Claus; and we come with a shopping list of the things we want, and we say, “Now listen, Lord, your servant speaks,” when we ought to say, “Speak, Lord, I’m listening. I am the listening one.”

#### **E. Are You Satisfied?**

Now, here was a man—listen—he was getting ready for Christmas. He was saved. He was surrendered. Friend, he was a man who was spiritual. He was a man who was sensitive, and he was a man who was satisfied. Look in verses 28 and 29: “*Then took he him up in his arms.*” (Luke 2:28) That is, Simeon takes the baby Jesus up in his arms because Mary and Joseph had come for certain purification rites to the temple. Old Simeon has been waiting for Messiah. Simeon is led by the Holy Spirit into the temple. He sees the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit of God says to Simeon, “That’s the one. That’s the baby.” And Simeon takes this baby in his arms, holds this baby to his chest, and says, “Now, Lord, now I’m ready. Let me depart in peace because, Father, you have spoken to me.” Look, if you will, in verses 28 and 29: “*Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*”—now, listen to this—“*according to thy word.*” (Luke 2:28–29) Now, this is just so wonderful. Here we have the Word of God, and the Spirit of God, and the Son of God coming together. That brings the peace of God in our heart.

Do you have peace? If you don’t have peace, you’re not ready for Christmas. Are

you ready to die? If you're not ready to die, you're not ready for Jesus to come. *You're not ready to live until you're ready to die.* Here's a man that says, "Lord, just take me on home. Take me home. I am ready to depart in peace," for "[blessed] in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." (Psalms 116:15) No man, no woman, is ready to live until they're no longer afraid to die.

Now, thank God that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ may deliver us from death, but we may die before He comes. But one thing we know that we know that we know: we're ready for Christmas and we're ready for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ if we meet these qualifications that were in the life of this man Simeon.

Now, having said all of that, that's just the front porch. Let's go in the house, okay? That's just an introduction to the message. Now, here's the message. We're talking about Jesus Christ, His incomparable life. And Simeon says six things about the Lord Jesus Christ. He says these by divine prophecy. He says these because he's a man anointed and filled with the Holy Ghost of God, and there are things that I want you to learn about our dear Savior who stepped out of heaven and came to earth. Who is this baby that Simeon held in his arms?

## **I. Jesus Is the One Who Brings Deliverance**

Number one: He is the One who brings deliverance. Chapter 2—look in verses 30 and 31. He says, "I'm ready to go. I'm ready to go to heaven." "*For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.*" (Luke 2:30–31) Why did Jesus come? To deliver us. The baby that Mary delivered was the One who would deliver us. As the song says, "He is our Deliverer." This is a hell-bound world. This is a sin-bound world. This is a world that needs a Savior, and that's the reason that Jesus came to earth. He was born of a virgin, that we might be born again.

Now, you know, there are a lot of people who get all excited about a baby. The merchants get excited about babies this time of year, and the Christ child and the manger scene. Why? Because the jingle bells to them are the bells of the cash register. Right now, for you it's "Jingle Bells." In a little while, it will be "Juggle Bills." But they're all excited about a baby. Well, anybody can look around and dance around a crib like that, but these people don't understand that Jesus Christ is come as a Savior to save them from their sins. That same giddy crowd that is dancing around the manger, give them one week and they'll be in a drunken stupor singing "Auld Lang Syne"—same crowd. Listen, friend, get away from this sentimentality about a baby being born, and understand that that baby is the Savior of the world. When Simeon held Him in his arms, he said, "*[I've] seen [your] salvation.*" (Luke 2:30) He is the Christ of deliverance.

## II. Jesus Is the One Who Dispels Darkness

Number two: He is the One who dispels darkness. Not only does He bring deliverance; He dispels darkness. Look, if you will, now, in verses 32 and 33. Simeon said, “[He is] a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things [that] were spoken of him.” (Luke 2:32–33) Jesus is the Light. I’m so grateful for the choir, as the choir sang that song about Jesus being the Light of the world. There’s no reason for you to stumble in darkness when you can walk in the light. You will never understand the meaning of life until you know the Light of the world, whose name is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, you know, there are some people who are afraid of Jesus. We laugh at children being afraid of the dark. I think more ridiculous than that is an adult afraid of the light. Men hate the light, and they will not come to the light because their deeds are evil. (John 3:19–20) But, He is the Light, and He is a delight; and there’s no greater joy than to know the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who dispels darkness. If you’re stumbling in darkness, if you want to know the way, He is the way. If you need light, He is the Light. If you’re seeking for understanding, He is the Truth.

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the world yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

Friend, Jesus is all this world needs today.

*Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way.  
O to [pull] back the grim curtains of night,  
One [look at] Jesus, and all will be [light]!*

—HARRY D. LOES

He is the One who dispels darkness.

## III. Jesus Is the One Who Determines Destiny

Number three: He, Jesus, is the One who determines destiny. Look again, if you will, in verse 34: “And Simeon blessed them”—that is, Mary and Joseph—“and said unto Mary his mother”—notice he doesn’t say, “and to Joseph, His father.” “Mary, His mother,” “he blessed them,” but he didn’t say, “father and mother” because Jesus was the earthly child of a heavenly Father and the heavenly child of an earthly mother—“And [he] blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother...this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” (Luke 2:34) I’m going to stop reading right there. He is the Christ of destiny. Listen, you will fall or rise on Jesus. Jesus will be to you a stepping stone or He will be a stumbling block, but your destiny is determined by what you will do

with the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I was studying this passage, a scripture came to my mind: 1 Peter 2, verses 6 to 8. Put it down. Peter says, *“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded”*—that is, “shall not be put to shame”—*“[For] unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the world, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”* (1 Peter 2:6–8) What does that mean? Christ is the Solid Rock. Christ is the Foundation Stone. Christ is the Cornerstone. And He’s before you today. You can build on Him or stumble over Him, but you cannot go around the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the One who determines destiny. Either Jesus Christ will be your Savior or Jesus Christ will be your judge. He will be a steppingstone or a stumbling stone, but you have an appointment with Jesus Christ. He is inescapable. He is inevitable. He is unavoidable. You have a date with Jesus. You’re going to meet Him as Savior or Judge. But as I live, as I stand here today, I’m telling you with all the emphasis, function, unction, and emotion of my soul—please listen to me—this baby that Simeon held in his hands is the Christ of your destiny, one way or the other. He is either the door that lets you in or the door that keeps you out, but you have a date with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what Jesus Christ will do with you is determined by what you will do with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give it to you very clearly and very plainly. John chapter 3, verse 36: *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* (John 3:36) If you, today, are not a believer, if you have never received the Lord Jesus Christ, it’s not one day that you’re going to face the wrath of God; the wrath of God is abiding on you right now. This baby is the One who determines destiny.

#### **IV. Jesus Is the One Who Provokes Derision**

Now, next, I want you to see He is the One who provokes derision. Look, if you will, again in verse 34: *“And Simeon...said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel”*—that, friend, is destiny. And listen to this—*“and for a sign which shall be spoken against.”* (Luke 2:34) Jesus, this baby, is going to face derision. He’s going to face mockery. He’s going to face blasphemy. When the Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth, some said, “You’re mad.” Others said, “He has a demon.” Others said, “He is a winebibber and a glutton.” (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34) Others inferred that He was born out of fornicator when the Pharisees said, *“We be not born of fornication”* (John 8:41)—“we know who our father is.” Do you get the sly

putdown, the slur that they put upon the Lord Jesus Christ? He is a sign that will be spoken against. If He is not spoken against, Brother David, you can be sure the gospel is not being preached.

Now, I know how to preach, if I wanted to, without any derision from the worldly crowd. Just preach a Jesus not virgin born, not sinless, no deity, no demand for the new birth, no standard of right and wrong, no judgment, no discipleship, and (especially this) no only way to heaven. Just preach that. Now today, we're all un-American if we don't put our arms around everybody else and say, "Your faith is just as good as ours." That is not so. That is a lie out of hell. *"Neither is there salvation in any other...there is [no] other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12) — than the name of Jesus. None. You see, *if Jesus is not the only way, He can't be any of the ways.* If Jesus is not the only way, He is a liar, for He said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: [and] no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) Either that's true or it's not true. Now, if it is true, He's the only way. If it is not true, He is a liar and He is none of the ways. *You can't just tip the hat to Jesus; you must bow the knee to Jesus.*

The early Christians could have escaped martyrdom had they offered a pinch of incense to Caesar and said, "Caesar is Lord and Christ is Lord." But they said, "No! Christos Kurios"—"He is the Lord. He is the only one." You see, this is the Christ of derision. He is the One who is spoken against. The Bible says at one time, one occasion in the Bible, *"They laughed him to scorn."* (Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53) Can you imagine—laughing, pointing to Jesus, laughing Him to scorn? More of that is happening in the world today. Jesus is the One who is derided. He is the One who is spoken against.

Have you ever thought about how this world hates Jesus Christ? We're going to talk about that in a little bit even more. They use His name in vain. Have you ever heard a person curse and say, "Oh Buddha!" or "Oh Confucius!" or "Oh Mohammed!"? No, they say, "Oh Jesus! Oh Christ!" They take the name of our Lord and Savior and mix it in the muck and in the mire and slime of their profanity and take that holy name upon their lips. There are people who mock Jesus, and they mock Him more and more, for He is a sign that is spoken against.

Now, come up close, and I want to tell you something: if you are His disciple, you also will be spoken against. The Bible says, *"[Beware] when all men...speak well of you!"* (Luke 6:26) And contrariwise, Jesus said, *"Blessed are [you], when men shall [persecute] you, and [revile] you, and...say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad."* (Matthew 5:11–12) And it is time that preachers in America stopped trying to win popularity contests and preach Jesus Christ, who may be the Christ of derision but He's the only Savior of the world—the only Savior of the

world, the only One. He is the Christ of derision.

## V. Jesus Is the One Who Causes Division

Now, number five: He is the One who causes division. You say, “Pastor Rogers, you’re dividing folks.” That’s true. Look again in chapter 2, verse 35: “(yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,)”—now, he’s speaking to Mary. He’s saying, “Mary, a sword is going to pierce through your own soul also”—“that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:35) Jesus is the most divisive force that has ever come into this world.

### A. Jesus Divides the Human Heart

Jesus divides human hearts. Let me give you an ancillary scripture here. Put in your margin “Hebrews 4:12”: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than [a] twoedged sword...dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) Simeon said, “Mary, this baby is going to be like a sword in your heart. It’s going to divide between your natural emotions as a mother and your desire for the will of God, and you’re going to find this conflict between natural emotions and the spiritual life, between your soul and the spirit.”

All of us who have received the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord feel that sword on the inside, do we not? The pull of the old life and the desire of the new life—do you ever feel that conflict? You say, “Pastor Rogers, I don’t have any conflict. I’m just doing just fine.” You’re not doing as fine as you think you’re doing. *If you’ve never met the devil, it’s because you and the devil have been going in the same direction.* You turn around, you give your heart to Jesus Christ, you become twice-born, you let the Spirit of God come into you, and you’re going to find that old nature and that new nature; there’s going to be a division in your life. The Lord Jesus divides an individual.

### B. Jesus Divides Families

I’ll tell you what else He does: He divides families. You say, “Oh, oh, no, no. Jesus unites families.” Well, why don’t you get your Bible and read it? Let me give you a verse—Matthew 10, beginning in verse 34: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword”—who said that? Jesus. Well, hold on now. Buckle your pew belt—“For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and...daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household”—now, listen to this, folks. You want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?—“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

*And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake [and the gospel's]"—“for my sake,” rather—“shall find it.” (Matthew 10:34–39)*

Now, Jesus is the unifier of families that are built on Him. Jesus is the unifier of those who believe in Him. How sweet it is to have this fellowship because we are one in the bond of love. But Amos 3:3 asks this question: *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”* (Amos 3:3) Now, when Jesus said that if we love father or mother, children, or anyone else more than He, we are not worthy of Him, (Matthew 10:37) that doesn't mean that we're not to love our families. I'm married to a lady that I would lay down my life for. She's absolutely, indescribably precious. But she knows she's not number one. She knows that. She knows she's number two. She knows that I love Jesus more than I love her, and she knows because I love Jesus more than I love her, I love her more than I could without Jesus. She knows that, so she doesn't mind being number two to Jesus Christ, nor should you. But there can be no one other who is number one other than Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ can divide families, and there may be some of you whose parents don't want you to come to Jesus. There may be some of you who would say, “I would have to disavow the tradition of my family if I come to Jesus.” There are some of you who would say, “My parents would not like it if I came to Jesus.” Come anyway. Give your heart to Jesus Christ.

### **C. Jesus Divides Churches**

He is the Christ who divides the human spirit. He is Christ who divides families. He is the Christ who may divide a church. Now, you all—oh, you look so beautiful this morning. Every one of you looks so holy, but you're not all holy. You say, “Pastor, you don't know who's who.” You're right, but God does. And I've been preaching long enough to know in a crowd like this not everybody is saved—not everybody who has their name on the church roll is saved. Now, there are husbands and wives sitting here together, but there is a division between husbands and wives as far as east is from the west, as far as heaven is from hell, because one is saved and the other is left. And you may be touching one another right now, but should the Rapture come, or should you die, you would be separated for all eternity.

The Lord divides churches. The Lord looks at this church this morning, and the Lord sees the choir sing—the Lord knows how many of those choir members understand and believe what they're singing and those who may not. The Lord sees when the offering is taken and you put your money in. But the Lord knows who is giving this morning in spite of himself. The Lord knows, when a preacher is preaching, whether that preacher is preaching the Word of God out of a heart that is pure and clean or whether that man is just mouthing something, whether he's a hireling. The Lord knows all of that. The Lord

knows when a congregation sings, “Oh, How I Love Jesus” whether they love Jesus or not. And I’m telling you that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who divides the professing church.

He is the Great Divider. Not all professors are possessors. Jesus said, “[*At the Judgment*] many [*shall*] say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name...cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them...depart from me, ye that work iniquity. [*I never knew you*].” (Matthew 7:22–23) What a sad division there will be when Jesus, therefore, comes again. Jesus is dividing, and He will divide for all eternity. At the Judgment He will divide between the sheep and the goats, the saved and the lost. And when He looks, His decision is not going to be made on the bankbook of finance or the bluebook of society, but the Lamb’s Book of Life. We divide people in strata. We say, “upper class,” “middle class,” and “lower class.” But God divides right and left, saved or lost. He is the Christ with the sword in His hand. I’m talking about serious business now. You get past this sentimentality about a little baby. Here Simeon is holding this baby in his arms.

## **VI. Jesus Is the One Who Reveals Decisions**

Now, here’s the sixth thing and the final thing I want to say about this baby: He is the One who reveals decisions. Look again, if you will, in verse 35: “(yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,)”—now, watch this—“that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:35) Do you know what the preaching of this Word is doing today? It’s revealing your thoughts. It’s exposing you to yourself and to God. He is the One who is revealing decisions.

You see, the gospel is a sabre of life unto life or death unto death. When I’m preaching, you may say, “I don’t agree with that. I will not accept that. I refuse that. I repudiate that. I will not yield to that.” He’s revealing your heart. There are others who say, “That is true. What he says is true. I need a Savior. I need to be saved. I need to love Him, know Him, and follow Him.” His Word is revealing your heart. You see, what makes the difference in individuals? It’s not education. It’s not social status. It is not environment. People can be raised in the same family, children—one child will love God and the other child not love God. Cain and Abel had basically the same environment. Two thieves on the cross—one crucified on Jesus’ right hand and one on the other. One of those thieves cursed and blasphemed and spit blasphemies in the face of Jesus; another one of those dying thieves said, “*Lord, remember me when [you come] into [your] kingdom.*” (Luke 23:42) I’ll preach this morning and some will say “yes” to Jesus and some will say “no” to Him. And the preaching of Him will decide and determine and reveal what’s in your heart—the same preaching. It’s a sabre; it’s a sword that cuts life unto life or death unto death. The same sun that melts ice hardens clay. The same

sermon that brings people to Jesus can harden people and turn them away from Jesus. But it's not the sermon that really does it. The sermon only reveals the heart. What is really in you is determined by how your heart resonates to the preaching of Jesus.

Look at the verse again: *“(yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”* (Luke 2:35) Now, what you do with Jesus is going to determine what Jesus does with you. Do you know what Simeon did? Simeon took this baby, held him in his arms, brought him to his breast, and said, “Lord God, I’m ready to go. Let me depart in peace. I have seen your salvation.” (Luke 2:28–30) Today you can embrace Jesus with the arms of faith. Today you can receive Him as your Lord and Savior, because as surely as I stand here this morning, the Jesus who came the first time in literal fulfillment of scripture is coming again. Amen?

## Conclusion

¶ A man told a story I read. I can hardly ever forget it. He said he went down to the train station and people were getting off the train and meeting loved ones, and there was embracing and kissing. I don't travel by train but plane. I love to get off the airplane and watch the people greet their loved ones. Don't you love to do that? And when they kiss—I travel with Joyce most of the time—I turn around and kiss her because everybody else is kissing. You just take advantage of every opportunity. But they're greeting one another. The people were getting off the train, and they were greeting. But this man said there at the train station, Brother David—he saw some men walk up, and they had a man with them; and that man had handcuffs on, and they were leading him away on that train. Evidentially, he was going to the penitentiary. And his children were there, and his wife was there; and they were weeping and wailing as this man was being led away. And then, that man said—“You know,” he said, “that's so much like the coming of Jesus. What joy it will be to those of us who know Him! What joy it will be when we have that grand reunion, when we meet our loved ones, when Jesus comes. But how sad it will be for some who will be bound and cast into outer darkness.¶

What Jesus does with you depends upon what you will do with Him. You can accept Him or you can reject Him. You can crown Him or you can crucify Him. But you cannot ignore Him. He is the Christ of destiny.

Bow your heads in prayer. If you're not certain that you're saved, I want you to get it certain right now. And if you would like to be saved, He's knocking at your heart's door. He brought you here to be saved. You can embrace Him with your arms of faith. Would you pray a prayer like this: “Dear God, I know that you love me. I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. I believe you're the Son of God. I welcome you into my life. I receive you now by faith as my Lord and Savior. Thank you that you died on that cross and

shed your blood for me. Thank you that you paid my sin debt with your blood. And now, by faith, I thank you for my salvation. I don't look for a feeling. I don't ask for a sign. I just stand on your Word. You cannot lie. Now, Lord Jesus, I'm very weak so begin now to make me the person you want me to be. And Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen."†

# The Lost Christ of Christmas

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 13, 1981**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 2:40–47**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. In What Sense We May Lose the Lord Jesus
- II. Who Lost the Lord Jesus
- III. When They Lost the Lord Jesus
- IV. How They Lost the Lord Jesus
- V. How Did They Find Him Again?

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to turn to Luke the second chapter that tells the Christmas story. And I want to use this as my subject tonight: “The Lost Christ of Christmas”—“The Lost Christ of Christmas.” If you’re not very careful, you’re going to lose Jesus this year during the Christmas season.

Now, in Luke chapter 2 and verse 40, we read these words: *“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all they that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.”* (Luke 2:40–47)

Now, here’s the point: Mary and Joseph lost Jesus. He was lost from them. I read just yesterday in the paper where some people traveling across the country stopped for gasoline. The little boy got out and went to the restroom. The car went on many, many miles down the road before they discovered the little boy was not in the backseat with his brothers and sisters. Perhaps you read the same story. It happens to people all the

time. One time, it happened to Billy Graham. He got out of the car when T. W. Wilson was driving the car after a crusade. T. W. Wilson went off and left Billy Graham in a service station with no billfold, needing a shave, and a rumpled-up overcoat. He had been sleeping in the back of that car. And the man wouldn't even believe it was Billy Graham. He almost never got home. And in a sense, that's what happened to Mary and Joseph. They just simply supposed that Jesus was with them, and they went a day's journey and did not realize that the boy Jesus was not with them.

Now, if you're not careful, you are going to lose Jesus this Christmas season. Now, before you knit your eyebrows too much, I want to talk to you a little bit about in what sense you might lose Christ. I want to talk to you about who may lose Christ. I want to talk to you about where you may lose the Lord Jesus. I want to talk to you about how you may lose the Lord Jesus. And I want to talk to you about what you may do if you lose the Lord Jesus this Christmas season, or any other season.

Now, first of all, in what sense may we lose the Lord Jesus? Well, we can never lose Him in the sense of our relationship with Him. Once you become a child of God, you're a child of God. Once you have been saved, you are forever saved. Now, you know that, don't you? I hope you know that. You see, there's a difference, however, in relationship and fellowship. Mary and Joseph lost Christ, but they did not lose Him in the sense of their relationship with Him; they simply lost Him in the sense of their fellowship with Him. They were there at Jerusalem and the feast of the Passover. They started to leave and go back home. They just simply assumed that Jesus Christ was in the midst. He was not there. He was still their child, or at least He was the foster son of Joseph and the child of Mary by the virgin birth. The relationship was there, but the fellowship was no longer there.

And that's the sense in which I'm talking about losing the Lord Jesus Christ. You can never lose your relationship with Christ, for He says in John chapter 10, verses 27, 28, and 29, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."* (John 10:27–29) That means that once God puts His mighty hands around you through the Lord Jesus Christ, there's no power in heaven above, in hell beneath, or earth present; no power present, no power to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38–39) Once you're a child of God, you're a child of God forever.

Sometimes when I quote those verses in John 10:27, 28, and 29, and it says, "No man shall be able to pluck them out of my hands," some person says, "Oh yes, no man

can do it; but the devil could do it.” You know, that’s stupid. That’s stupid to think that the devil could take and pry open the mighty hand of Almighty God and take you out. Friend, don’t you know, if the devil could, he would? If he could, he would. Now, if he hasn’t taken you out yet, and he could, then why hasn’t he? Well, he’s been good to you, hasn’t he? And therefore, if you get to heaven, it will be by the goodness of the devil. That would be a strange doctrine, wouldn’t it, that people are going to heaven by the goodness of the devil? The only reason he hasn’t is he can’t. He can’t. If he could, he would. You see, none. Actually, the Bible doesn’t say no man is able to pluck them out. If you look at the King James Version of the Bible that you have there in your hand, that I’m preaching from, it actually says, “neither shall any pluck them out.” The word *man* is italicized, which means it’s not in the original. It’s just supplied by the translators.

## **I. In What Sense We May Lose the Lord Jesus**

And so, point number one: In what sense may we lose the Lord Jesus this Christmas season? We’re not going to ever lose Him if we’re saved, in the sense of relationship. But if we’re not very careful, we can lose the Lord Jesus in the sense of fellowship. And if you lose Him in the sense of fellowship, you’re going to be very sorrowful. Do you know what Mary and Joseph said? They said to the Lord Jesus when they found Him, “[We] have sought thee sorrowing”—“[We] have sought thee sorrowing”—in the end of Luke 2, verse 48. There’s always sorrow in the life of a Christian when he loses fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And the most miserable man on earth is not a lost man; he’s a saved man out of fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

## **II. Who Lost the Lord Jesus**

Now, secondly, not only how, or in what manner, we might lose the Lord Jesus this Christmas season, but I want you to notice something else: I want you to notice who lost the Lord Jesus. Mary lost Him. Joseph lost Him. Those who were most intimately associated with the Lord Jesus lost Him. And that can be a warning to every one on this platform. It can be a warning to Elmer Bailey, Dr. Pollard, Adrian Rogers, and Ken Babrick. It can be a warning to all of you. I mean, if Mary lost Jesus, if Joseph lost Jesus, then we’d better take heed to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 12, that says, “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” (1 Corinthians 10:12) All of us are in danger of backsliding and losing fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And as a matter of fact, as you study this Bible, you’re going to find there are some of God’s chiefest of saints who have backslidden.

We read in the Bible where Noah backslid. We read in the Bible where David became a backslider. We read in the Bible where Samson was a backslider. We read in

the Bible where Peter backslid, and cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus. And I'm trying to tell you this, dear friend: that you may be in danger this Christmas season of losing the Lord Jesus Christ. You think that you don't have to keep your guard up, that it might be somebody else. You know, sometimes the best of people are the ones that backslid. You know, people have the idea, "Well, if you're a preacher, you never have to worry about something like that." Don't you know the devil aims his biggest guns at God's preachers? And the closer you are to the Lord Jesus Christ, the more fire you're going to get from the devil. Of course! And all of us need to again heed the warning of the Apostle Paul, "*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*"

### **III. When They Lost the Lord Jesus**

Now, this is a very simple message, but I want you to notice the third thing; I want you to notice when they lost the Lord Jesus. When was it that they lost Christ? Well, look, if you will, please, in verse 41: "*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.*" (Luke 2:41) They lost the Lord Jesus Christ, that intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus, in the midst of a religious celebration. As a matter of fact, the Passover was all about Him, and they lost Him in the celebration that was all about Him.

And if you're not careful, you may do exactly the same thing this Christmas. You may lose the Christ of Christmas in the midst of Christmas. I think it was the irony of ironies that the Passover was about the Lord Jesus, and it was at the Passover they lost the Lord Jesus of whom the Passover spoke. And so, in times of religious activity and times of Christian celebration, you may lose the Lord Jesus.

You can lose Christ in strange places. Do you know that men are more prone to backslide in seminary than almost anywhere else? Did you know you can backslide with a Bible under your arm, that sometimes you're studying the Word of God and it becomes a textbook to you rather than the precious Word of God? Did you know that sometimes you can lose your sense of the Lord Jesus Christ, working on the Singing Christmas Tree? Did you know sometimes you can lose your sense of the Lord Jesus Christ, doing all of the festivities of Christmas?

I heard of a little girl who loved her daddy so much she wanted to make a special Christmas present for her daddy. And she found a pattern for some slippers. And so she decided she would make her daddy some slippers for Christmas. And this little girl and her dad had a very close relationship. And many times she would come sit on his lap, and he would tell her stories, and she would hug his neck and all of those things that little girls do when they sit in Daddy's lap. But she, wanting the present to be ready for Christmas, did not sit in Daddy's lap. And he didn't get the chance to tell her stories, because every evening she would dismiss herself from supper, up the stairs she would

go, and stay in her room working on that present for Daddy. And she did it day after day after day until the days turned to weeks and the weeks to months. And then finally, on Christmas Day, she came down and presented those slippers to her daddy. And of course, he acted grateful. But in the back of his mind and in his heart he thought to himself, “I had much rather have had the fellowship with my little girl than to have these slippers she was making for me.”

Now, of course, he didn't tell her that. He'd been an unwise father had he told her that. But I wonder sometimes if the very things we think we're doing for Christ may be the things that are keeping us from Christ. Jesus had rather have you sit at His feet than sing in the choir. Jesus had rather have you spend a quiet time with Him alone on your knees than be in church. Now I'm not against being in church. You ought to be in church. I'm not against singing in the choir. But I'm trying to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if you're not careful, that the very things that you do for Christ can become a substitute for your love to Christ and can come between you and the Lord Jesus. It was in the midst of a religious celebration that they lost Him. And if you're not careful, in the very Christmas season you may lose the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. How They Lost the Lord Jesus**

Now, the next thing I want you to notice: Not only where they lost the Lord Jesus, but I want you to notice specifically how they lost the Lord Jesus. Look, if you will, here in verse 44: *“But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.”* (Luke 2:44)

How did they lose Him? They just supposed He was with them. And that's the danger. They did not stop. They did not check up. They just simply thought, “Well, He's been with us all the rest of the time; surely He's with us now.” I'm wondering right now, are you supposing the Lord Jesus is with you? Have you really checked? Do you know? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that Jesus is to you tonight a bright, living reality? Did you know that you can come to church, hear these sermons, take these notes, use your Bible, sing your hymns, give your money, and not be in fellowship with Christ, and you suppose that you are? Did you know one of the saddest things on earth is for a person to think they're right with God, when they're not?

Did you know that Samson rose up to fight the Philistines, and the Bible says that he knew not that the Spirit of God had departed from him? (Judges 16:20) Do you know what the Bible says about that church at Laodicea? *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”*—*“thou sayest...and knowest not.”* (Revelation 3:17)

I wonder if there are some of you here sitting in this building tonight thinking, “That’s right, preacher: tell them they might lose Christ.” I wonder if there are some of you here tonight who are not as right with Christ as you ought to be, supposing He’s with you, when He’s not. We ought to do an inventory. I want to tell you something, my dear friend: If Jesus Christ is not real to you tonight—I mean, really real—if God’s Spirit is not vibrant in your heart, you’re a backslider. If there was ever a time when you loved Jesus Christ more than you love Him at this very moment, to that degree you’re backslidden.

Now, how did they lose Him? It wasn’t that they cursed Him. It wasn’t that they got drunk. They just went away from Him a step at a time, supposing He was with them. And that’s the way people backslid: a step at a time, supposing the Lord was with them. Oh, they lost Him right in the midst of a religious celebration, and they walked away from Him a step at a time, taking it for granted that He was with them when He was not.

## **V. How Did They Find Him Again?**

Now, finally, how did they find Him again? Well, let’s look in verses 44 and following:

*“But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.”* (Luke 2:44–46)

Where did they find Him? Right where they left Him. That’s where they found Him. They went right back to Jerusalem. And right at the place where they left Him was just the place that they found Him. And where are you going to find Him, dear friend? You’re going to find Him right where you left Him.

Years ago, Tom Clayton told me a story of a man sitting in an automobile. His wife was sitting way over there by the right hand door. He was sitting under the steering wheel at the left hand door. She looked over to him and said, “Honey, remember when we first got married how close we used to sit? Now you’re over here, and I’m over there.” He said, “I haven’t moved.”

Listen, friend. Jesus is right there. You’re the one that’s moved. And when you find Him, you’re going to find Him right where you left Him. Now, where is it? I don’t know where you may have left Him this Christmas season. I don’t even know if you left Him, but I want to tell you where you might have left Him. You might have left Him when you started neglecting the secret place of prayer. Then you’re going to find Him when you go right back to that secret place of prayer. You might have left Him when you started neglecting the house of worship. Then that’s where you’re going to find Him. You might have left Him when some grudge, some bad feeling, came in your heart toward

someone in this church or toward someone in your family; you had some difference with some brother, some sister. Then you're going to find Him when you go back and make that thing right. You may have left Him when some grievous sin or habit came. But I want to tell you this: You're going to find Him right where you left Him.

## **Conclusion**

Now, let me sum it up. How can you lose Jesus? Not in the sense of relationship, but in the sense of fellowship. Who may lose Jesus? Those whom we might least expect to lose Him may lose Him. When may you lose Him? Right in the middle of religious celebrations. How do you lose Him? Just supposing He's with you and going away one step at a time. Where are you going to find Him? Right back where you lost Him.

# The Lost Christ of Christmas

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 16, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 2:41–50**

*“And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.”*

LUKE 2:43

## Outline

Introduction

- I. In What Sense May We Lose Jesus?
- II. Who May Lose Jesus?
- III. Where Do We Lose Jesus?
- IV. How May We Lose Jesus?
- V. How Can We Find Jesus Again?

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word and turn to Luke 2, the Christmas story. There’s an addendum to the Christmas story that we’re going to look at tonight. The title of our sermon tonight is “The Lost Christ.” You know, it’s been my observation that rather than Christmas drawing people closer to Christ, there’s a very real sense in which people are drawn away from the Lord Jesus in the midst of the celebration. Their eyes are turned to parties and gifts, and many times there’s a letdown in church attendance; there is a softening of the prayer life; there is sometimes a lessening of gifts and soul winning and witnessing—not always, but many times. It seems like in the very midst of the celebration we lose the Lord Jesus.

Now we don’t find, as I said this morning, any record of the early church celebrating Christmas, as such. Of course the wise men came, as we preached this morning, and paid homage to the child. And of course the shepherds came to the sheepfold, or wherever it was that our Lord Jesus was born, and worshipped Him. But the church did not worship Him, as such. I think the closest thing to what we call Christmas is Passover. I don’t mean that Passover and Christmas are alike, but I mean in the early church they had a celebration. It was a religious celebration. It was a time of gift giving. It was a time of feasting. It was a time of trips. It was a time when people got together. It was a time of joy. It was a time of worship. It was a time of conviviality. It was a big

thing. In Bible times, Passover was to those people what Christmas is to us, so far as celebration.

And a very interesting thing happens here in the book of Luke right after the Christmas story, right after the events that took place around His birth. The Bible tells of Jesus, who being twelve years of age, went with His parents to Passover; and while Jesus was with His parents there at Passover, after the celebration, His parents going back home had gone an entire day's journey and recognized and realized that Jesus wasn't even in the midst. They had lost Jesus in the midst of the celebration, Passover, which was all about Jesus.

I wonder if the same thing might happen to you. So we're going to ask and answer five questions tonight, and I want you to get these not only in your head but down in your heart. Number one: In what sense may we lose Christ? Number two: Who may lose Christ? Number three: Where may we lose Christ? Number four: How can we lose Him? And, number five: How may we find Him again?

Now, let's read the story here. I'm going to begin in verse 41—Luke 2:41: *“Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.”* (Luke 2:41–50)

## **I. In What Sense May We Lose Jesus?**

Now, let me first of all ask this question: In what sense may we lose Jesus? Well, Mary and Joseph were related to Jesus. Joseph is His foster father. Thank God for the spirit of Joseph. Mary was His literal, actual mother. Now, how did they lose Jesus? They did not lose Jesus in the sense of relationship. Mary was still His mother; Joseph still His earthly father. It was not in the sense of relationship that they lost Jesus; it was in the sense of fellowship that they lost the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now if you're saved, twice-born, you can never ever lose that relationship. Let me

give you a verse for your margin—John 10, verses 27 and following. Jesus said, “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish...*”—now you don’t get eternal life when you die; you get eternal life when you believe. If you have eternal life, it can never end. Whatever you have, if you ever lose it, whatever it was, it wasn’t eternal. If you had it for ten years and lost it, then you had a ten-year life. Jesus said, “*I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish...*”—not “every once in a while some will perish”—“*they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.*” (John 10:27–29)

And actually, if you have a King James Version of the Scripture, the word *man* is in italics. That is, it’s not in the original; it’s italicized, so you know it’s not in the original. What He says is: “Neither shall *any* pluck them out of my hand.” Any what? Any man, any event, any thing. Some people have the idea that the devil can take you out of the hand of God. That’s ridiculous! If you are still saved, and the devil could take you out, why hasn’t he done it? Hasn’t he been good to you? So that would be a strange doctrine, wouldn’t it? You’re going to heaven by the goodness of the devil! No, the only reason he hasn’t, is, precious friend, he can’t. “Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” Can you think of a power that is strong enough to open the mighty hand of Jesus—and encased in the mighty hand of God the Father—and take one of His out? You cannot lose the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sense of relationship.

Another great verse corresponding to that is in the Old Testament—Psalm 37, verses 23 and 24, where our Lord says, “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*” (Psalm 27:23–24)

Now if you’re trying to teach your child to walk, which many of us have had the experience to do, when that little toddler gets old enough to take a few steps, he may fall and get up, and fall again and get up. But if you’re in a particular situation where you don’t want him to fall—suppose you’re crossing the street—you don’t just give him your finger like you might do ordinarily and let him hold your finger that’s just a handful for that chubby little hand. What you do, you put his entire hand in your hand. And he’s not holding you this time; you’re holding him. And you start across the street; and his little knees buckle, but he can only go so far. “*Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*”

Has He ever done that for you? Friend, He’s done that for me many times. My knees have buckled, or whatever; but, thank God, I was not holding on to Him; He was holding on to me. “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with*

*his hand.”*

So there can be a loss of fellowship, not a loss of relationship. In this passage of Scripture, Mary and Joseph said, “We sought you sorrowfully.” Their hearts were filled with sorrow. May I tell you that if you are out of fellowship with the Lord, I’m absolutely certain that you have no joy tonight. You might have happiness; you may have fun; but you don’t have joy. I’ve often said—and I believe this with all of my heart—*the most miserable person in the world is not an unsaved person. The most miserable person in the world is a saved person out of fellowship with Jesus—far more miserable than an unsaved person.* Mary and Joseph said, “Look, we have sought thee sorrowfully.”

Do you want to know tonight whether or not Christ is lost in your heart and in your life—not in the sense of relationship, but in the sense of fellowship? Take the joy test. Is there joy in your heart right now? “*Joy unspeakable and full of glory*”? (1 Peter 1:8) Well, Pastor, nobody is supposed to be joyful all the time. I disagree with you. The Bible says, “*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.*” (Philippians 4:4) And the only way you can rejoice always is to rejoice in the Lord. He never changes.

And so, in what sense may we lose the Lord Jesus? Not in the sense of relationship, but in the sense of fellowship. Mary was still His mother, Joseph still His foster father, but there was not that connectivity. Jesus was not in their midst.

## **II. Who May Lose Jesus?**

Number two: Who may lose Jesus? Who may lose Christ? Well, it may surprise us to see that it was Mary and Joseph that lost Him. Look in verse 23. The Bible says, “*And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it.*” (Luke 2:23) Those, many times, who we least expect to lose the Lord Jesus may lose the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you may be a deacon in this church. You may be sitting over here to my right hand on the platform, or to my left hand on the staff. It could be the man behind the pulpit who is in danger of losing the Lord Jesus Christ? If you will study the Bible, you will find out that God’s choicest of saints got out of fellowship with Him from time to time. Noah, David, Moses, Samson, Peter—all of these—and others in the Bible, got out of fellowship with the Lord.

The Bible says, “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” (1 Corinthians 10:12) Oswald Chambers has said this: “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.” Do you think you’re beyond getting away from God? Do you? Mary did. Joseph did. The great saints of the Bible have at one time or another gotten away from the Lord. Sometimes people think, “You know, if I were just a pastor like Pastor Rogers; if I just lived in a holy atmosphere, I’d never have any temptation. He just doesn’t know what I face out there in the dirty old world.” Friend, don’t you know that the devil aims

his biggest guns at God's servants? Don't you know that, no matter who you are, you've never come to a place where you're not in danger of slipping away from the Lord?

### III. Where Do We Lose Jesus?

Now, here's a third question we want to ask and answer. In what sense may we lose Christ? Who may lose Christ? Number three: Where did they lose the Lord Jesus? Look, if you will, in verse 41: "*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.*" (Luke 2:41) They lost Him in the midst of a religious ceremony. They lost Him in a spiritual celebration. They didn't lose Him in a dance hall. They didn't lose Him in a nightclub. They did not lose Him in some den of iniquity. It was in the midst of a religious ceremony that they lost the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Passover was all about Jesus, and it was there that they lost the Lord Jesus.

Could it be this Christmas that rather than you getting closer to Jesus, come New Year's, you have to repent and draw back to the Lord, because you've gotten away from Him? Do you know what I found out when I was going to seminary? I found out that a great number of seminary students would backslide with a Bible under their arm in seminary. I mean, in the midst of studying about the Lord Jesus, somehow they lost that fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

As a matter of fact, I was reading about that church at Laodicea in the book of the Revelation, and our Lord remonstrated with them and said, "*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*" (Revelation 3:17) And then He ends that passage of Scripture to that church at Laodicea saying in Revelation 3:20—we use it as an evangelistic text, but it's really not an evangelistic text—"*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.*" (Revelation 3:20) Where is He knocking? Friend, He's not knocking at the sinner's heart; He's knocking at the door of the church.

You know, we say, "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,*" (Matthew 18:20) but sometimes we've so forgotten His name that He's out there on the outside, with His name, knocking, trying to get in. Will Christmas take you from Jesus? It could. The very Passover celebration was that which separated Mary and Joseph from Jesus. What a lesson that ought to be to us! What a warning that ought to be to us! They lost Him in the midst of a religious celebration.

Year and years ago I heard a story—I don't know where it came from, but I heard it over forty years ago, I suppose—about a man who had a princess that he loved very much. He was a prince, fabulously wealthy; his beautiful princess died, and he was heartbroken. He determined that he would build for this princess the most glorious shrine, the most glorious burial place, that had ever been built. It would make the Taj

Mahal look pitiful in comparison. So he got the architects of the kingdom and drew the plans for this beautiful shrine, this temple. It was to be magnificent, because of the great love that he had for her. No plan was quite good enough, as he studied all the plans, until finally he thought he had come to perfection. There was no amount of money that he would renege on, that he would not spend. And so every day he would come to watch this building that was being built for his princess. And the spires would go up, and the marble would gleam, and the gold overlay would flash in the sun. And as it was coming together; it was more and more beautiful. He would watch it. He was obsessed with it. It had to be perfect. It had to be just right.

It was nearing completion. He was up in one of the high minarets there in that palace, and he looked down, and it was perfect, except for one thing. There was something there that just didn't seem to fit. It seemed a little out of place. It seemed to mar the whole thing. He called the workmen and said, "Look, you see that down there: it just somehow doesn't fit. Take that out, and it will be perfect." And the workmen went down and removed the tomb of the princess.

I've thought about that story many times, and I thought, you know, how we have this elaborate Christmas, supposed to be all about Jesus, and we say, you know, "He's kind of messing it up a little bit; Jesus is kind of cramping our style a little bit at Christmas time." I wonder if we've done that; I wonder if somehow we have let the very celebration of Christmas take us from the Christ of Christmas.

#### **IV. How May We Lose Jesus?**

Next, how may we lose Jesus? How did they do it? Well, look, if you will, in chapter 2, and verse 44: "*But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey.*" (Luke 2:44) How did they lose Him? By presumption, by supposition; they just assumed He was with them, and they didn't check up. Now they didn't lose Him by getting drunk. They didn't lose Him by opposing Him or denying Him. They went a day's journey. They went one step at a time. And every step they took, they were getting further from Him, supposing the whole time He was with them.

I wonder if that's true about you. I had to ask myself this question before I preached this message: "Adrian, are you just supposing that you're right with God? Are you just supposing that Jesus is a reality in your life?" That's easy to do. I mean, you can preach; you can sing; you can be a deacon; you can come to church; you can teach your class; you can sing in the choir; you go from day to day and say, "Well, I'm fine." Read in the Old Testament about Samson. The Bible says the Spirit of the Lord departed from Samson, and he never knew it. (Judges 16:20) They went a day's journey, a step at a time, just simply supposing that Jesus was with them.

I wonder—and I've had to ask myself this question—are you willing tonight to look

into your own heart and see if the presence of Jesus is a reality or mere supposition? Neglect is often the way to get away from Jesus, and that neglect is often based on supposition. It's often the cause of backsliding. I mentioned the church at Laodicea a while back. That church said to itself, "I'm rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing." (Revelation 3:17) Do you know what a danger is tonight? The danger is that I could be preaching this message supposing that Jesus is real in my heart.

There are times in my life when I shut myself up to God and I let God peel me like an onion. Everything that I tend to hold dear, I offer to the Lord. I want my life to be absolutely transparent before the Lord. You know, the Bible says when your eye is single, your body is full of light. (Matthew 6:22) Have you ever come to that place where your eye is single? What does that mean: "when your eye is single"? That means that you have no side issues but Jesus Christ; you have nothing that you've withheld; there's no unconfessed, unrepented of sin; there is no love that is greater than your love for the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's not an easy place to come to. The devil will try to keep you from coming to that place.

Sometimes I have to shut myself up and fight Satan—or some demon; I don't think I'm worth the devil himself; he probably sent a little old weak demon to work on me—but I say, "Look, I've come to do business with God. I'm not going to get up off my knees, off my face, until my body is full of light, till I know that I know that I know it's not a supposition that Jesus Christ is real to me." And I can't explain to you, but I know when I come to that place, it's a wonderful place: your body is just full of light. You can say it and mean it; it's not a supposition: "I know there is nothing between my soul and the Savior."

May I suggest you do that? May I suggest that we all do that from time to time—that we take a spiritual inventory; that we don't go just one step at a time, every step further away from him, supposing He's with us? It's an easy thing to do. We may lose Him by supposition.

## **V. How Can We Find Jesus Again?**

Now, here's the last question: How can we find Jesus again? Well, look, if you will again, in verses 45 and 46: "*And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.*" (Luke 2:45–46) Question: Where did they find Him? Right where they left Him. They found Him by going back to where they first lost Him. If Jesus Christ is not real to you and He was once real to you; if you do not have that conscious awareness of His presence, just go back to where you first left Him.

You say, "Well, I don't know where that was." I believe, if you open your heart to the

Lord, He'll show you where it was; if you pray that prayer we've been given in the Psalms: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be some wicked way in me."* (Psalm 139:23–24)

I heard about a man in a rescue mission one time who was trying to get right with God, and the worker said, "Get down on your knees and confess your sins." He said, "Well, I don't know what they are." The worker said, "You don't?" He said, "No." The man said, "Well, guess at it." He said he guessed it right the first time.

Friend, you know where you've gotten away from the Lord. Maybe you've just been neglecting your quiet time—no egregious sin. Maybe you've loved the newspaper and the television more than you've loved the Bible. Maybe you've stopped attending the worship services like you used to. Or maybe you've gotten some bitterness, some grudge in your heart. Maybe there's some inordinate affection. Or maybe it's just carelessness, going on day after day without tuning your heart to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Where will you find Jesus? Right where you left Him. And you can't plow around that error. You have to confess that sin.

Another story that I heard many years ago was a father and a son who were living together. The wife and mother had died, and the father and the son had sweet fellowship as they lived in the little cottage. It was a chilly night, and the father said to his son, "Son, the fire is going out. Will you go get another piece of wood and put it on the fire?" The son said, "Dad, I'm busy. You get the wood." The father said, "Son, I'm asking you if you'll go get the piece of wood to put on the fire. I'm your father. I'm older than you are. That's not an unthinkable thing that I would ask you to do." The son said, "I'm busy." The father then said, "Son, listen. I'm sorry it's come to this. I'm not asking you now; I'm telling you: "Would you go get another piece of wood and put it on the fire!" The son said, "Well, since you're telling me, I'm going to give you the answer: No, I will not do it."

It got cold in the room, not only physically, but there was that clash between two wills. Then the father said to his son, "Now, Son, this is a serious matter, more serious than a piece of wood. You've defied me. You've refused to do what I've asked you to do and then told you to do. Now, Son, this is my house. You're a grown man. You're living under my roof. The least you could do would be to obey your father." He said, "I'm not going to do it." "Well, Son, it's come down to this: either you obey me, or you cannot stay here anymore." "Very well," he said, "I'll not stay here anymore." And he jumped up, walked out of the room into the night, and slammed the door behind him, and walked away from his father and from his home—a brokenA hearted, perplexed father.

The days came and went. The son began to think to himself, "I have been a fool. Why was I so selfish? Why was I so stubborn? How can I treat my own dear father that way? How can I fail to obey him? I've been wicked. I don't deserve to be forgiven, but I

want to be, and I'm going to humble myself and go back to my father." And he went back, very much like the prodigal son. He said, "Dad, I'm so sorry. I don't know what got into me. I'm sure it was just sheer wickedness, sheer pride, sheer selfishness. Daddy, you've been a wonderful dad to me. Thank you for taking care of me. Thank you for loving me. Forgive me, Dad, for my arrogance, for my selfishness. Dad, I'd like to come back and spend my days with you. Can I come in?"

The father, with tears, reached out his arms and said, "Son, that's an answer to my prayers. I'm so glad you came home. Thank you for doing that. Come on in. But, Son, before you sit down, would you put another piece of wood on the fire?"

You know where you left Him. You know where you got away from God. How are you going to get back with Him? Just go right back to where you left Him. Whatever it was, go back to that spot, go back to that place, go back to that disobedience, and deal with it. Until you do, you cannot have that fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

The sermon is over. This point will be made. How tragic it will be this Christmas if you, a deacon, a preacher, a soloist, a missionary, a godly man or woman, let the very celebration of His birth draw you away from Him! And you may not even be conscious of it, just going one step at a time. It may be that you'll want to say in the words of that old song, "I've wandered far away from God, and now I'm coming home." Would you bow your heads in prayer?

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you take inventory? Is Jesus Christ real to you? I'm not asking, "Are you saved?" That's relationship. I'm talking about fellowship. Are you just assuming and presuming some things tonight? May I ask it another way? Was there ever a time when you loved Him better than you do now? If so, you're backslidden. When you cease to be better, you cease to be good. Let's spend a few moments in prayer and I'm going to stop talking for a while, and I'm going to ask one of these instrumentalists to play softly, and I want us to do a little inventory tonight. And I'm not going to ask you to do anything that I'm not going to do, and let's just see if perhaps some way, somehow, that we might be supposing Him to be in the midst, and we've been walking step by step, in supposition, without Jesus being real this Christmas season.

# Intercessory Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 22, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 3:21**

*“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened.”*

LUKE 3:21

## Outline

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- A. They Are Bankrupt
- B. They Are Brokenhearted
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- D. They Are Blind
- E. They Are Bruised

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Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to get a Bible out—if you don't have a Bible, there may be one there in the pew near you—and find Luke the third chapter, if you would, please. And I want to speak to you tonight about “Intercessory Prayer.” This is the time when we're coming to the end of the year and taking inventory. And only a month stands between us and the beginning of a new year. And we're rushing pell-mell to a new millennium. And I've been taking inventory of my own life and setting some personal goals. And there is a goal that I've had, I guess, most of my Christian life. It's being intensified in these last days. And that is to pray better, to be more of a prayer warrior, to learn to intercede. And I want to encourage you to do the same thing.

Now I want you to look, if you will, in verse 21: “*Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened.*” (Luke 3:21) Do you know, I've read that passage many, many times, and for a long time I skipped over that little phrase “*and praying*” was baptized. A small phrase, but the Holy Spirit of God never wastes any words. And the significant thing about this verse is this is the inauguration of Jesus' ministry. Now this is not to say that Jesus

never did anything good or right or holy before this time, but this was the inauguration of His public ministry. This is where He was anointed by the Holy Spirit for that specific task that God had called Him to.

Now it's one thing to be filled with the Spirit; it's another thing to be anointed with the Spirit. Jesus was filled with the Spirit from a child. And John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb. Certainly he did not supersede our Lord. This was not when Jesus was filled with the Spirit. You'll never convince me that Jesus lived thirty years in His own strength and in His own flesh. No, He was filled with the Spirit from a child. But now He is to be anointed with the Spirit.

And what is the difference between the filling and the anointing? Well, the anointing is a special touch for a specific task. And Jesus, at His anointing, which, by the way, was simultaneous with His baptism, commenced His ministry by praying. He continues His ministry in prayer. And He concludes His ministry in prayer. And if I had time tonight, I could show you all of that prayer was the backbone of the ministry of our Lord and Savior.

Now, what was His ministry? Why did He come? We don't have to guess about that. This same Bible tells us in the Gospel of Luke Jesus Himself told us what His ministry was. He said, *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* (Luke 19:10) That's why He came. He didn't come primarily as a teacher. He didn't come as a reformer. He didn't come as an educator. He didn't come as a healer or a doctor. He came primarily as what? *"To seek and to save that which was lost."*

And what is our business? We don't have to guess about it. Jesus said, "As my Father has sent me, so send I you." (John 20:21) What is the major task, therefore, of my life? It is to seek and save that which is lost. I am to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. I am to walk as He walked. He came to seek and to save that which is lost. And He began that seeking and that saving in prayer. And so as I stand on the threshold of a new year, look backward over my shoulder at some successes and failures of the past year, I am resolved—and I want you to pray for me in this matter—that God will make me more of an intercessor for those that are lost.

Now that brings up a very interesting question. Can we pray for the lost? Does it make any difference if we pray for the lost? Not only can we, but ought we to do so, and must we do so? And the Apostle Paul gave us the example in Romans chapter 10 and verse 1 when He said, *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."* (Romans 10:1) Well, if Paul prayed for Israel to be saved, we ought to be praying for our kinfolks and our loved ones to be saved.

Now I want to lay on your heart tonight three things that intercession did in the life of Christ and three things that intercession will do in you and through you. That will be the message tonight.

## I. Intercessory Prayer Liberates Sinners

The first thing I want you to see is this: Intercession will liberate sinners. Now Jesus, immediately after He was baptized, was led into the wilderness, as you know, and was tempted of Satan forty days and forty nights. And then He came out of the wilderness. And begin in chapter 4, verse 16, now; just fast-forward to chapter 4 and verse 16, referring to Jesus: *“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.”* Now Jesus was a regular attendee at the synagogue worship. That was His custom. Now He stands up and He opens the Bible, the Old Testament, the scroll, and He stands up to read: *“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias.”* That’s Isaiah, as we would say it. *“And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,”*—now He’s not reading randomly here; He’s looking for this particular verse, and here’s the verse that He reads—*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”* (Luke 4:16–19)

Now these are the ones that intercession will liberate. Before Jesus began this ministry, He had begun to intercede for these. Now we’re beginning a ministry here at Bellevue Baptist Church under the leadership of Phil Weatherwax to reach the same ones that Jesus is describing here in verse 18. Look at them.

### A. They Are Bankrupt

First of all, they are bankrupt. Look in verse 18: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.”* (Luke 4:18) Now the word *poor* here doesn’t mean just those who have little. It literally means those who have absolutely nothing. It’s the same word that our Lord uses when He says, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”* (Matthew 5:3) And the term *“poor in spirit”* means a person who is reduced to begging, a person who is bankrupt. And you see, folks, it doesn’t matter how much money a man has in the bank: if he doesn’t know Jesus, he is bankrupt. We need to understand this. Some people think because they are financially well-heeled, that in God’s sight, they’re not poor. You know what Revelation chapter 3, verse 17, said to that church at Laodicea: *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”* (Revelation 3:17)

### B. They Are Brokenhearted

Now we have a generation of people around us here in Memphis, Tennessee, who are poor. Some are financially poor. All are spiritually poor until they know Jesus. But He

came not only to the poor; He also came to the brokenhearted. Look again in verse 18: *“He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted.”* (Luke 4:18)

Now, folks, our city is being baptized with salty tears. You sit here in this building tonight with the joy of the Lord and the peace of God in your heart. But pick up the newspaper. Have you noticed the mayhem, the crime, the brutality, the heartache, the sorrow, the untenable condition of those who are around us? They are brokenhearted. Now many of them don't seem brokenhearted. They are laughing. But the reason they are laughing on the outside is they hurt so bad on the inside. Do you know what's happening to America? We're being swept away with amusement. People are not wanting to think. They cannot look themselves in the face. They cannot look life in the face. And so they are frying their brain with amusement, because they do not want to think. They are brokenhearted. The Bible says in Job chapter 14 and verse 1, *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.”* (Job 14:1)

### **C. They Are Bound**

Now not only are they bankrupt, and not only are they brokenhearted, but they are bound. Look, if you will, in the next phrase here: *“to preach deliverance to the captives.”* (Luke 11:18) These people have been taken prisoner. They are bound by Satan. They couldn't set themselves free if they wanted to. They're described in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verses 25 and 26, which tells how Timothy is to be, *“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;”—they're at war with themselves—“if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”* (2 Timothy 2:25–26) He has ensnared them. Whenever he will, he just leads them around with a hook in their nose. And John said in 1 John chapter 5, verse 19, *“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.”* (1 John 5:19) That literally means “in the bosom of wickedness.” Get an idea of a mother nursing her child, and that's what the term *“lieth in wickedness”* pictures. This world is being rocked in the arms of Satan, and the demons of hell are singing the lullabies of hell, and this world has been chloroformed and captivated by Satan.

### **D. They Are Blind**

These people are bankrupt. These people are brokenhearted. These people are bound. And to make it worse, they're blind. They don't even know it. *“And recovering of sight to the blind”:* (Luke 4:18) He's not talking here about those who are physically blind; He's talking about those who are spiritually blind. The Apostle Paul knew this, and he wrote in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 4, *“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not...”*—your eyes can be blind and your mind can be

blind—*“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”* (2 Corinthians 4:4) Don’t get the idea that men merely need light. They need more than light. They need sight. And they’re blind and they can’t understand. They are blind to their sins. They are blind to the dangers of hell. They’re blind to the loving face of God. And when you talk to a lost man about Jesus, and he says, “I just don’t see it,” he is not lying. He doesn’t see it. So don’t scold a blind man for not seeing.

### **E. They Are Bruised**

Now here are these people. They are bankrupt. They are brokenhearted. They are bound. They are blind. And then they are bruised. Look again: *“to set at liberty them that are bruised.”* (Luke 4:18) The word *bruised* means “crushed.” Satan is a cruel taskmaster. He loves to torment. I said that God anointed Jesus. Why did God anoint Jesus? Acts 10, verse 38, tells us, *“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.”* (Acts 10:38) The devil is bruising oppressing people.

Now they are all around us. They are in your neighborhood, my neighborhood, your school, your place of business; people I buy gasoline from, where we get our groceries; wherever it is, everywhere they go, we’re surrounded by these people. And it is intercession that will liberate sinners. And Jesus, who prayed, said to you, to me, *“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”* (John 20:21)

## **II. Intercessory Prayer Incapacitates Satan**

Now, here’s the second thing intercession will do: Not only will it liberate sinners, but intercession will incapacitate Satan, because you cannot liberate sinners until you incapacitate Satan. Now you’ve got to take them away from this prison house of despair. Now Jesus met Satan, as we’ve said, there in Luke chapter 4, in that contest in the wilderness, and Jesus overcame him. And then Jesus set about to rob his prison house of despair. But before Jesus took these captives away from Satan, He first bound Satan. Now they accused Jesus of being in collusion with Satan, but Jesus said, “I am not in collusion with Satan; I am in collision with Satan. I have bound Satan.”

In Matthew chapter 12 and verse 29, Jesus explained how He had healed that man who was demon-possessed, and He said, *“Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.”* (Matthew 12:29) Now Jesus spoiled Satan’s house. To *spoil* means to “carry away his goods.” Jesus entered into the domain of Satan, and Jesus carried away the captives that Satan had taken and made them His own prisoners of love. Now intercession will liberate sinners, because intercession will incapacitate Satan.

Now we need to learn this at Bellevue: Our warfare is not with flesh and blood. Our warfare is not with the White House. It's not with the Congress. It's not with Hollywood. It is not with the pornographers. It is not with the beer baron. It is not with the distiller. It is not with the gambling houses. Our warfare is with Satan. The Bible makes it clear and it makes it plain that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12) And when Simon Peter tried to keep Jesus Christ from going to the cross—an idea that Satan had put in the heart and mind of Simon Peter—Jesus looked at Simon Peter, but He looked right through Simon Peter, and said, "*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me.*" (Matthew 16:23) Now, don't get the idea that Jesus was calling Simon Peter Satan. Jesus knew far better than that. Jesus knew that it was Satan that was where the battle was, not with Simon Peter's flesh and blood. Jesus knew that the battle was with principalities and powers.

In Acts chapter 16, when the Apostle Paul was preaching the gospel, a little demon-possessed girl came up behind him and began to point a finger at him and say, "*These men are servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.*" (Acts 16:17) "Well," you say, "wasn't she telling the truth?" Yes, that is what made it all the worse. She was trying to identify the power of darkness with the power of light and to confuse the matter. And Paul did not want the patronage and the endorsement of hell. But he did not turn around and begin to argue with that girl, nor did he call a psychiatrist or a psychologist. But the Apostle Paul drove the demon spirit out of this girl, because the Apostle Paul realized that his battle was not with this girl. She herself was a victim. She herself had been taken captive. And we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. And I want to tell this church, as I'm telling my own heart, we are not going to out-argue, out-organize, or out-maneuver the devil. But we can bind him in prayer.

Now here's something you need to understand. Satan has already been bound. And when Jesus Christ was on that cross facing the cross, He said, "*Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*" (John 12:31) Satan's back has already been broken at Calvary.

Now I want to give you some scriptures that prove that. Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14: "*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,*"—that's us; He's calling us the children—"he also himself likewise took part of the same;"—Jesus became flesh and blood; why?—"that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14) And the word *destroy* here does not mean "obliterate"; it means "render helpless." Jesus had to become a man in order to die. God in pure spirit could not die. "*The wages of sin is death.*" (Romans 6:23) That's what Jesus came to pay. So Jesus became flesh and blood like us, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And Jesus, when He

died, did destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Now, put this verse there also—Colossians 2, verses 14 and 15. The Bible says that when Jesus died, He was *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”*—that is, all of the Old Testament laws that adjudicated us guilty Jesus took and He nailed to the cross when He was nailed to the cross. And then, verse 15 is the verse I want you to look at—*“and having spoiled principalities and powers...”*—now, remember the Bible says we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness, principalities and powers. Jesus—*“spoiled principalities and powers”*—and—*“...made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”* (Colossians 2:14–15)

Now the word *spoil* literally means “to strip naked.” That’s really what it means. When a general would be conquered in these battles, to humiliate the general, not only would they take away his garments and his medals; they would strip him naked and parade him in front of the peoples that had conquered him. And it says here that Jesus has *“spoiled principalities and powers.”* He has *“made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”* That is, Satan is chained to Jesus’ chariot wheels, and He has led him through the streets a captive, stripped, shamed, and subdued. Jesus at Calvary not only broke Satan’s back; He added insult to injury.

And by the way, do you know what the word for “preaching” is? One of the most common words for “preaching” in the Bible is a word that was used for a man who was a herald. It’s the *kerux*, a herald. They didn’t have CNN, and so after the battle they would send a runner. And if a victory had been won, they would tell the runner, “You go and tell the folks back home that we have conquered; the battle is over and we have won.” And that man who would go, that runner, the same word that was used to describe him is used to describe a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do you know what the job, the duty, the privilege of a preacher is? It’s to announce that the battle is over and we have won. We have won! Satan has been completely decimated, obliterated, stripped, shamed, and subdued.

Now if that is true, why do we have to bind him? That is a very interesting question. Why do we have to bind him if he’s already been obliterated? Well, you see, Jesus’ victory over Satan was absolute. But even though it’s absolute, it still must be appropriated. It is the same thing we see when Jesus died for our sins. When Jesus died for our sins, that was totally done. It was absolute. He paid for our sins with His blood. And the Bible says in 1 John, *“He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* (1 John 2:2) Jesus died for everybody: “not for our sins only, the sins of the whole world.”

Is everybody saved? Of course not! Why? Because they have not appropriated that which Jesus did. That which was absolute and complete still has to be appropriated by

faith. And the Bible says therefore in the third chapter of John, *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already,”*—why?—*“because he hath not believed.”* (John 3:18) Not because he’s a sinner: those sins have been paid for. That’s already done. Oh, he’ll go to hell because of his sins; but he need not, because now all he must do is to appropriate what has already been done. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the church to help us to live a victorious life. Has that been done? Yes! Is that an accomplished fact? Yes! Is every Christian Spirit-filled? No. Why? Because he hasn’t possessed his possessions. He has not appropriated that which is his. When Jesus died, Jesus defeated Satan. That was absolute. When Jesus died, He paid for our sins. That was absolute. When God sent the Holy Spirit, that is absolute. But those things must be appropriated in our lives. Just because Jesus died for everybody, everybody is not saved. And just because Satan’s back has been broken at Calvary, that does not mean that you, *ipso facto*, can saunter forth and say, “I have power and authority over Satan,” unless you appropriate that power, unless you call upon it. And the way you do this is by prayer. It is prayer!

The Bible makes this very clear and very plain. Matthew chapter 18, verses 18 and 19: *“Verily I say unto you...”*—here’s Jesus speaking; listen to it—*“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 18:18) Now our ministry is one of binding and loosing. We need to bind Satan and loose the captives—binding Satan and loosing the captives. Now, how do you do that? Well, listen to verse 19: *“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 18:19) The binding and the loosing is done by the asking. It’s done in prayer.

Now, don’t get the idea that you decide what you want done, and you pray here on earth, and God seconds the motion. No. When we pray, we take our cue from heaven. And the idea is, whatever we bind on earth has already been bound in heaven, and whatever we loose on earth has already been loosed in heaven. But we have got to bring the two together. And it is prayer that liberates the sinner. It is prayer that incapacitates Satan. We have got to learn how to pray.

Now the reason that many times we’re losing the war is we’re not even showing up for the battle. It’s prayer that sets the captives free. “Now, Adrian, does that mean if I find somebody who’s lost, and I begin to pray for them, they have no will of their own, they must be saved?” No, it doesn’t mean that. Your prayers do not force someone to be saved, but your prayers free someone to be saved. You can bind Satan. Because you have prayed and believed God, they can now see; they can now understand; they can now receive Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

### III. Intercessory Prayer Activates Soul Winners

Now, here's the third thing, and I'll be finished. Not only will prayer liberate sinners. And how will it do that? It will incapacitate Satan. But here's the third thing: When we begin to pray, prayer will activate soul winners. Now you're in Luke chapter 4; just go on to Luke chapter 5 and look in verse 16: *"And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed."* That's Jesus. Well, He's already been out in the wilderness and praying. Yes, and He's doing it again. I said His ministry commenced in prayer. It continued in prayer. It concludes in prayer. Now here is the Lord Jesus in the midst of all of this hubbub, all of this ministry, and people are being liberated. But now, notice: *"And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them."* Boy, I love that phrase, *"the power of the Lord was present to heal them."* *"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him"*—that is, to lay the sick man before Jesus. *"And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus."* And look in verse 20: *"And when he saw their faith,"*—their faith; not the man's faith, their faith—*"he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."* (Luke 5:16–20)

Now Jesus is praying. And as a result of Jesus praying, you're going to find people who are having a heart to bring other people to Jesus Christ. Now the victory has been won at Calvary. We can pray and incapacitate Satan. We can pray and liberate sinners. But we must also pray to activate soul winners. I mean, it all goes together. It's all part of the same process. You see, what we've got to do, we've got to get the lost person and the soul winner together, because Jesus said, "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21)

If you have loved ones in your family that are lost, you need to begin to pray that God will send a soul winner, that God will send a witness, that God will move somebody next door, or that God will put somebody in the classroom beside them, or God will bring someone in that place of business. But you dare not do that unless you yourself are willing to be that person. I mean, listen. You cannot be such a hypocrite as to say, "God, I'll not go. I'll not speak. I don't want to do it. Don't use me, but use somebody else." Now He may not be able to use you. It may be that the door is shut. But what you need to do is to begin to pray that God will send somebody to that loved one.

You ask, "Pastor Rogers, is this the prayer that we ought to pray?" Absolutely! Put in your margin Matthew chapter 9, verses 37 and 38. Jesus is speaking now: *"Then saith he to his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."*—do you

know the problem with Memphis, Tennessee? It's not out there; it's in here. The harvest is plenteous; the labourers are few. Here's a prayer that Jesus told us to pray—*"pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."* (Matthew 9:37–38)

Now prayer will activate soul winners. Jesus prayed, and there were four men who brought a man on a stretcher and laid that man right at the feet of Jesus. When this church gets serious about praying, our people are going to get serious about bringing people to Jesus Christ. And there are people, friend, they cannot come; they've got to be brought. They don't want to come; they've got to be sought. They don't know; they've got to be taught. And God is the One who has called us to do it.

Now, let me give you another verse that fits in with activating soul winners. Colossians chapter 4, verses 2 and 3—here's a command from the Lord through the Apostle Paul: *"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."* (Colossians 4:2–3) Plain English: Paul said, "Keep on praying. And pray for me, so that when I preach, I'll preach with power."

Do you pray for me? I hope you do. You ought to. You have to listen to me. It's kind of foolish if you don't. Pray for me. Pray for others, because what this verse is saying is that it is prayer that activates soul winning. You see, listen. The Holy Spirit of God works on both ends. The Holy Spirit of God gets the person out there who is willing to hear, and then the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the soul winner to go find that person. It's like a guided missile. When we pray, God gets them together.

Do you remember the Ethiopian eunuch? Philip was out there. Philip was in Samaria in a revival meeting, and the Spirit of God said, "You go out there into the desert," and Philip went out into the desert. It would be like Billy Graham leading a citywide crusade and then going to the backsides of nowhere, to the boondocks. And there he met that man, that Ethiopian eunuch. He has been reading the Bible. What do you think he was reading? He was reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. (Isaiah 53) Do you think that's a coincidence? That's the gospel in the Old Testament. And the Spirit says, "Go join yourself to the chariot." And Philip went there and led the man to Jesus Christ. It opened up all North Africa for the gospel. (Acts 8:26–40)

I read in the Bible about Cornelius, who was a centurion. That means he was a Roman army officer. And he prayed to God, but he didn't know God. And the Spirit of God spoke to Cornelius and said, "Cornelius, you go find a man named Peter. Peter will tell you how you and your house can be saved." Then God is over here talking to Peter, and while Peter is praying, Peter has a vision that he's going to be able to speak to Cornelius. And God gets the two together. (Acts 10)

You can find that pattern in the Bible. You find Jesus, who was a man of prayer,

said, “I must needs go through Samaria.” When He gets to Samaria, He is sitting there on the curbing of the well. That well I’ve been to many times. It’s the same well. And there comes that woman of Samaria out to meet him. And Jesus leads her to faith in Himself, and a revival begins in Samaria. (John 4:1–42)

Folks, listen. When we pray, the supernatural begins to happen. You know, out there in our city tomorrow there will be some people who have been softened up by the Holy Spirit. They are under the conviction of sin. And people have been praying. But when you pray also, and when we pray, God will guide us to those people. Those people are just ready. They are ripe. Manley Beasley used to say, “You get right with God, you’ll have to backslide to keep from winning souls.” They are out there. But, you see, it’s done in the context of prayer. And in these few chapters, as we study the life of the Lord Jesus, as Jesus began His ministry, we see many things, but we see three things very clearly: that Jesus’ ministry moved on the wheels of prayer, and it was prayer that liberated sinners; it’s prayer that incapacitated Satan; and it is prayer that activated soul winners.

## **Conclusion**

So, what does that say to us? Well, I’ll tell you what it says to me. I need to pray more. And so do you. Now some man wisely said, “We can do more than pray after we pray, but we can’t do any more than pray until we pray.” So, why don’t you join your pastor and say, “Pastor, this coming year, I’m going to learn more about prayer”? And pray for me. Pray we’ll have a pastor who’s more of a man of prayer.

I’ve just been this past week in Los Angeles with 3,300 people spending two and a half days in fasting and prayer. And I believe God is starting a fire burning out there. And I believe that God wants to have a prayer revival across America. Folks, I’m going to tell you something. We are in serious trouble as a nation—serious trouble—and the only thing that we can do to slow down the flow of wickedness, debauchery, sin, and rebellion is to bombard heaven with our prayers. Satan has no defense against it. Prayer can go through prison walls. Satan has no anti-prayer missile. He can’t shoot it down. It can go anywhere in a split second. It can even have a delayed detonation. We just need to learn to pray.

# How to Handle Temptation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: January 9, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 4:1**

*“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan,  
and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”*

LUKE 4:1

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Luke chapter 4—the Gospel of Luke, chapter 4. That’s easy to find. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament.

We’re talking tonight about how to handle temptation. There are three ways to handle temptation and two of them are wrong. One way is, is just simply to give in to temptation. Some people don’t worry about temptation because they live like animals for self-gratification, self-preservation, self-propagation, whatever they want to do, however they want to act, whatever they want to feel like, they do it. Whatever feels good is natural, and whatever is natural is beautiful, and so that’s the way they live. That’s one

way that's wrong.

The other way is to fight temptation in the strength of the flesh. And while it may be admirable, it is futile; it never, ever works—not at all. There may be some overcoming of some particular habit or tip, but we just trade one for the other, and if we do succeed in one area, then we become proud, bitter Pharisees. We'd never really overcome temptation.

The third way is the way that we're going to talk about tonight, and that is to overcome temptation, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the passage that is before us is, is very, very important. Look, if you will, in Luke, chapter four, beginning in verse 1.

“And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil...” Now let's just pause right there and, and let me give you three reasons why you ought to be interested in what we have to say.

#### **A. There Is an Enemy Who Would Harm Us**

First of all, there is an enemy who would harm us. Look, if you will, again, tempted of the Lord, “...tempted, of the devil...” rather, “being forty days tempted of the devil...” That is in verse 2. Our Lord was tempted of the devil. There is an enemy who would harm us.

Now I don't whether you believe that the devil is real or not. You may believe that the devil is some medieval superstition. That's what I was taught when I was in college. I went to a liberal college, and, they said that sure, people believed in the devil in Jesus' time and in the middle ages, and so forth, that's because they were not educated. And when the Bible speaks of the devil, you're not to take that literally. There's no literal devil. That's just the personification of evil, that we have evil within ourselves and we personify it and we call that the devil.

Well, Jesus had no evil in Him to personify, I can tell you that. I read in the Bible in Mark, chapter five where some demons went into some pigs and the pigs ran down to the sea and were drown, committed hogicide. I want to tell you that it was not a superstition or some personification that caused that. There is a real devil. Now you'd better believe that. He wants to sabotage your life, and the dynamite is in place, the fuse is laid, and the match is struck. And if you don't understand that, you're headed for a fall. There is the enemy that would harm us.

#### **B. There Is Our Experience That Humbles Us**

And, secondly, there is our experience that would humble us. Most of us have failed. As a matter of fact, most of us have failed miserably, ignominiously, and repeatedly, and we'd better learn something about how to handle temptation. We've failed enough to humble us.

### **C. There Is Our Example to Help Us**

Not only is there an enemy who would harm us, and our experience that humbles us, but there is our example to help us.

Now I want to say that what we are going to find here in Luke chapter four is an example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both our pattern and our strength for victory, all at the same time. He is both the example and the power for victory. And as we study here about how the Lord Jesus Christ dealt with Satan, we're going to learn some examples and some principles for us, because the Bible teaches that we are to walk in His footsteps. We are to walk as He walked.

## **I. The Possibility of Temptation**

Now, the first thing I want you to think about tonight as we're thinking about how to have a temptation is the very possibility of temptation. Temptation is a very possible fact in your life. Look in chapter four, verse one.

“And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned unto Jordan, and was led of the Spirit into the wilderness, And being forty days tempted of the devil...” Now let me give you sub-points as we're talking about the possibility of temptation.

### **A. Temptation Can Come to Any Person**

Temptation can come, number one, to any person. It was Jesus who was tempted. Now if Jesus was tempted, do you think that somehow you have gone beyond temptation? Jesus was tempted. Hebrews chapter four, verse fifteen, says, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Jesus was tempted, but He never sinned. Some people can't believe that Jesus was tempted, but the Bible says He was tempted. He was tempted of the devil. This passage tells us this. The Hebrew passage tells us this. People ask, “Well, if Jesus was tempted, then could Jesus have sinned?” No! It's impossible for Him to sin. Was the temptation real? Yes!

Preachers have often used this illustration to help explain that. If the engineers, for example, build a railroad trestle, a bridge that goes over a chasm, after they built it suppose they bring three diesel engines out there and put them on that bridge and revs them up until there is tremendous vibration, great weight and great force on that bridge. And let them all run at, at full power, sitting there, vibrating that bridge. What are the engineers trying to show? Are they trying to show that the bridge will fall? No, they're showing that the bridge will not fall. And, when Jesus was tempted, we're not seeing that Jesus could sin, we're seeing that He could not sin. But just as the stress was put upon that bridge in the form illustration so the stress was put upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want you to see that temptation can come to any person.

Now, if Satan had the audacity to tempt the very Son of God, do you think that he will not tempt you? Do you think perhaps that he doesn't tempt the pastor or these people on the platform, or Brother Whitmire, or whatever? No, he's going to tempt you. As a matter of fact, the devil aims his biggest guns at God's servants, and I find temptation every day of my life. And if you're proud, you're tempting the devil to tempt you.

Put this scripture down: 1 Corinthians, chapter ten, beginning in verse twelve. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man..." The point is very much this: that if you think that you stand, you're headed for a fall, and that temptation is common to man. So put it down, first of all, temptation can come to any person.

### **B. Temptation Can Come at Any Period**

Secondly, temptation can come at any period. Look again in chapter four, verse 1: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Now what was Jesus doing in Jordan? Jesus had just been baptized in water by John the Baptist at Jordan, and the Holy Spirit of God had descended upon Him.

It was a glorious experience, so glorious, that there was a visible manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and there was the audible manifestation of the pleasure of God. Read in Luke, chapter three. Just go back and look in verse 22: "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." I would say what a high watermark that was. This is the inauguration of the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And immediately after that, He's tempted.

Do you think, for example, if you've been in some great spiritual experience, some revival crusade, that you can now just coast, that somehow you're bathed with an aura of protection because you've had a high spiritual experience? No. When God opens the windows of heaven to bless you, to bless you, the devil will open the doors of hell to blast you. And, what you have here is the devil after the dove, the Holy Spirit. And then, immediately then comes Satan to tempt Him.

And, and you're going to find out that this will happen, at any period in your life. You're never going to come to a time where you're going to say, "I am beyond temptation." You're never going to be so holy or so blessed that temptation will not come. If temptation came to the Son of God, it will come to you. If temptation came to Jesus after this high and holy moment, it can come to you at any time. As a matter of fact, if you study of the life of those in the Bible who fell, who were tempted, many of them fell and got discouraged after high and holy moments.

For example, Moses, after he led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, and led

them to victory, then the people began to murmur and complain, and he found out you don't have to be a cannibal to get fed up with people. They began to murmur and complain at Moses. And here's Moses, after one of the greatest victories that people have ever had, and he is asking God to kill him.

You read the same thing—Elijah had a contest with 450 prophets on Mount Carmel. The fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice. I won't tell you the story, but just to say it was, indeed, a mountain-top experience, literally and spiritually, and then right after that you're going to find Elijah running from Jezebel and praying and asking God to kill him, sitting under a juniper tree, whimpering, and he's fallen into deep sin and despondency.

Jonah. After Jonah saw a great revival in the City of Nineveh, a city-wide crusade, a city just about the size of Memphis, Tennessee, where the entire city repented in sackcloth and ashes. You would think that if you'd ever gone through an experience like that, you'd never sin again. And then, in the next chapter there's Jonah, when his little old gourd vine withered, wanting God to kill him.

I've had the same experience. If you're a preacher, that we can come out of a revival meeting, some great blessing, God pouring out His blessing upon the church, and, of course, Joyce and I never have arguments, but we get in some bodacious discussions, and it's an amazing thing. How can you come out of a service like that with just the glow, the aura, the glory of God is there and then Satan move in to tempt. And all of us know that. I mean, temptation can come to any person. Say amen. It can come at any period. And it will come to you.

### **C. Temptation Can Come in Any Place**

And temptation can come in any place. Temptation comes in any place. Now, the first Adam was tempted in the garden; the second Adam was tempted in the wilderness. Satan showed up in the Garden of Eden. Do you think that environment is going to protect you? You're not going to have a better environment than the Garden of Eden. Do you think that a bad environment is your excuse? Jesus was in a bad environment, and yet Jesus won the victory. The first Adam fell in the garden; the second Adam succeeded in the wilderness.

Now what that ought to do is to destroy the idea of the social gospel and the pratings of the behavioral psychologists, who are always teaching that you're going to change the man by changing his environment. Obviously, we ought to provide the best environment that we can, but the environment of victory is a spiritual environment. It is not isolation; it's insulation.

And so, therefore, if you're on a church staff, don't get the idea that if you come to work at Bellevue, Rita Hedquist, that there won't be any temptation. There will be. Don't get the idea that if you are in this auditorium that you can't be tempted in this very place.

You can be. As a matter of fact, the devil right now might be tempting you not to listen. And, any place, temptation can come to any person, any period, any place.

#### **D. Temptation Can Come at Any Point**

Next, temptation can come at any point—at any point. Remember the scripture that I gave you from Hebrews chapter four and verse fifteen? It says this, that Jesus “...was tempted in all points like as we are...” Don’t get the idea that you are immune to temptation on certain points. Actually, Jesus was tempted in all points and so will you be.

Now that doesn’t mean that Jesus faced every kind of temptation. For example, the devil did not tempt Jesus to smoke, marijuana in the wilderness. Jesus was not tempted to run a red light in the wilderness. That’s not what it means. The incidentals may differ, but, basically, the temptation is the same.

Let me tell you that temptation has only three sources, three major points. Let me tell you what they are.

Put in your margin 1 John, chapter 2, and verse 16: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.” And that is the source of temptation, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. I want you to see how Satan tempted Jesus in all of these points, and he will tempt you in all of these points. Before I show you how Jesus was tempted, let me delineate those points just a little bit more.

##### **1. The Lust of the Flesh**

Now, the lust of the flesh speaks of your carnal nature that, that works upon your body. The sins of the lust of the flesh, or the temptation of the lust of flesh, deals with doing something in the physical realm. That’s the lust of the flesh.

##### **2. The Lust of the Eyes**

Then the lust of the eyes doesn’t deal with doing, but it deals with having. Your eyes have an appetite. Have you ever heard anybody say, “Feast your eyes upon that?” This is the desire to acquire and to have, and it deals not primarily with the body, but with the soul, the mind, the emotion, and the will.

##### **3. The Pride of Life**

And then the pride of life. That doesn’t deal with doing, it doesn’t deal with having; it deals with being. The pride of life is to be somebody important, to strut your stuff. It is exactly what the word says, the pride of life. It deals not with doing, not with having, but with being.

The first of these temptations deals with our passions, the second deals with our possessions, and the third deals with our pride. The first of these temptations is toward

the body, the second is toward the soul, the third is toward the spirit. Pride is a matter of the spirit that separates us from God. “God resists the proud, but He gives grace unto the humble.”

Now I want you to see the temptation of Jesus, and I want you to see how Jesus was tempted in all of these points, like as we are. For example, Satan endeavored to use the lust of the flesh against Jesus. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: “And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone, that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

Now what was this? This was a temptation of the lust of the flesh; that is, to satisfy his appetite. Make a god of your cravings. Satisfy your body, your flesh, with food, with sleep, with sex, with liquor, with recreation. Make a god of your body.

Put in your margin Philippians, chapter 3, verses 18 and 19. Paul said, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, Whose end is destruction—now listen to this—whose God is their belly, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

Turn these stones into bread. Now, obviously, there’s nothing wrong with eating bread. As a matter of fact, this same Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” It’s the same Jesus who fed His disciples with bread and fish. Obviously, there’s nothing wrong with bread. But Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness. This was a Spirit-led fast. And what the devil was saying to Jesus was, “Put the desires of Your flesh above the will of God.” Sin is often the abuse and misuse of something good. Good things become bad things when they take the place of best things. And many of us may be tempted in the lust of our flesh more than we realize. Things are not wrong. Bread is not wrong. But what does Matthew 6:33 say? “Seek ye”—what?—“first the kingdom of God and His righteous, and all these things shall be added unto you.” God will not take second place in Adrian’s life nor in your life. And I got under tremendous conviction as I studied for this, and I wondered how many times I’ve asked God to take second place and I’ve let my meals, rest, television, friends, fun, or anything else come before God. God is not a cosmic killjoy. As I taught you this morning from the Book of Ecclesiastes, God wants you to enjoy life, but God will not take second place. And what Satan was saying to Jesus is, “Put God in second place. Put the Father in second place. Forget this fasting. Turn these stones into bread.” And so, there you have it, Jesus is being tempted in the area of doing the lust of the flesh.

Now, secondly, He was tempted with the lust of the eyes. Go right on down to verse 5 now and continue to read. “And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him,

All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for all that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.”

Now, the devil here makes some big offers. He says, “Look at all of this splendor, look at all of this pomp, look at all of this glory. Just feast your eyes upon that. That can be yours.” What’s he dealing with now? Not doing, but having. Not passions, but possessions. “And, and I’m going to give you this.” And Jesus did not say to Satan, “It’s not yours to give.” Because God gave it to Adam and Adam gave it to Satan, and Satan, though he was the original con artist, still held possession of the kingdoms of this world.

Now, again, it’s not wrong for you to acquire goods. Most of us will go to work tomorrow to acquire goods. There’s nothing wrong with having things, nothing wrong with possessions, but the lust of the eyes is a source of temptation. 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, and verse 10: “For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they’ve ailed from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” A literally rendering of the Greek, I believe, is the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. You can get in all kinds of difficulty when you decide that you’re going to get all that you can get.

Now let me ask you a question again about your own life. What are your personal goals? I mean, what really, if you were to sit down for the new year and write out your personal goals, what are you looking for? Paying off your house? Retiring? A bank account? Investment? Your children’s education? Are those your goals? I feel sorry for you if those are your major goals. You ought to be more consumed with the character of your children, your devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, your loved ones coming to know Jesus. Let me ask you a question, and don’t answer it lightly. Do you hold in your possession any material thing that you would not gladly depart with for the glory of God? Do you hold in your possession any material thing that you would not gladly depart with, give up, for the glory of God? Are things that important to you? Are you more impressed with the lives of the rich and the famous than the godly and the faithful? Who would you rather have a meal with, a godly missionary or Donald Trump? “Well, you say, “that’s a joke. I wouldn’t want to be with Donald Trump.” A lot of Baptists would. I mean, they’d be telling their friends the time I dinner with Donald Trump. And, Mr. Trump, if you get this tape, we love you. We want you to come to Jesus. But, here’s the point. Many of us are molded by these things far more than we realize. All that’s in the world, the lust of the flesh—that’s in the area of doing, and then, the lust of the eyes—that’s in the area of having, and Jesus was tempted there.

And then, thirdly, there’s the pride of life. Look, if you will now, in, in chapter 4, beginning in verse 9, and you’re going to see how Satan tries to tempt Him with the pride of life. “And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence; For it is

written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; And in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” The prophet Malachi had said, “The lord whom you seek shall come suddenly to his temple.” Wouldn’t that be a great way for the Messiah to make a grand entrance? The pinnacle of the temple was there looking over the Valley of Kidron. You look down and you get dizzy at that height. Well, he says, “Look, you’ve got all this power. Just step off, float down, make a grand entrance.” What was that all about? That’s the pride of life. To do something spectacular, to be seen of men, get attention to yourself. This doing deals primarily with, with, doing or having, but it deals with being. “If you are the Son of God, show that you are the Son of God.” This is not dealing with passions or possessions; it’s dealing with pride because that’s all there is in the world. That’s all the tools that the devil has to work with. And you’d be surprised how the devil works on you in the same way.

Madison Avenue is built on this. We’ll often see an ad like this: drive the car that will make your neighbors envious, or, you know, there’s nothing wrong with wanting a nice car, but there’s certainly something wrong with wanting one nicer than your neighbor. But that’s what motivates us, not that we need a, another car; we want a better car, something better than somebody else. Listen to an ad. Do you ever hear an ad like this: Dear Mr. Rogers, Your name is on several mailing lists in which you are classified as being highly literate, progressive, interested in world affairs, good literature, and science. Therefore, I know you will be interested in what I have to say. Well, of course, since he described me perfectly. You know, there’s, where’s this appeal. This appeal is to the pride, and we are molded by this far more than we realize, and Madison Avenue makes megabucks teaching kids that they have to have blue jeans with a certain insignia on the hip pocket, or whatever it, you know, whatever comes with it. We are molded this way in the idea of being.

Such common things as gossip. Do you know why people gossip? They’re trying to pull other people down. Now, like a drowning person, they think if they can pull others down that somehow they are elevating themselves, getting their own head above water when they pull other people down. Its, that’s the reason many people drink liquor. They don’t like the taste of it, but you see, when a man is drunk he feels like he’s 10 feet tall. I don’t know from personal experience, I’ve never been drunk, thank God, but it’s my understanding that the man gets the twisted idea that he is no longer dull. He doesn’t have to worry about his job tensions. He has no trouble. He’s witty. He’s strong. He’s clever. He’s rich. And, therefore, drunkenness and drugs appeal to his pride, as well as to the lust of his flesh. Children disobey because of this. I asked the little children this morning, “Would you obey your parents?” They need to be taught to obey their parents. Do you know why children disobey parents sometimes? A child sometimes had rather

be spanked than be ignored. They're looking, craving, for attention. This is in all of us.

Now, what, what am I saying? Temptation may come to any person. Temptation may come at any period. Temptation may come in any place. And temptation can come at any point. We just need to understand what the principles of temptation, the possibility of temptation is. It's common to man. You'll walk out of here and face temptation, but you don't have to walk out of here to face temptation. It comes inside the building. I mean, if the devil had the audacity to tempt Adam in the Garden of Eden, he certainly has the audacity to tempt you in the sanctuary.

## **II. The Principles of Triumph**

Now, here's the second thing. I want you to notice not only the very possibility of temptation, but, secondly, and, and I won't be as long, but I want you to notice the principles of triumph. I want you to notice how Jesus came out victorious. Now remember that Jesus is both our example and our strength, and so there are some wonderful principles here, of triumph.

### **A. The Principle of Sonship**

All right. First of all, there's what I want to call the principle of sonship. Now go back to Luke, chapter 3 and look in verse 22. At His baptism, God the Father spoke. The Bible says there, "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Now the thing that enabled Jesus to have victory was that He was the Son of God. You say, "Well, that counts me out, I'm not the Son of God." Oh, yes, you are. If you've been saved, you have become a child of God, a son or a daughter of God. You see, everybody here in this place is either the son of God or a slave of Satan. Now if you're a slave of Satan you have no hope of victory. If you're a son of God that is the first principle of victory. See, Jesus left heaven and became the Son of Man that we, men, might become sons and daughters of God. When you are born into God's family you become not the, but a son of God. You are born again. And that is the first principle of victory—the principle of sonship. Now if you're not saved you have no real assurance or a possibility of genuine victory. There's the principle of sonship. Or, if you are a lady or a girl, of daughterhood.

### **B. The Principle of Submission**

Now the second principle is the principle of submission. You can be a son of God and not necessarily be submissive. Jesus said this is, God the Father said of Jesus in chapter 3, verse 22, "...this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Well, why could God the Father say that of His Son? Because Jesus, the Son, said, "I do always those things that please Him." And if you are a disobedient son, a disobedient daughter,

you have placed yourself in the devil's realm. Jesus, it is clear, is being led of the Spirit. Go down to chapter 4, verse 1: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led of the Spirit into the wilderness." Jesus now is obedient. He is obeying, the Holy Spirit of God. He is being led by the Spirit. He is submissive.

Now let me tell something. I'm writing a book on this, and I want you to pray for me because I'm having a struggle writing the book. It's not that I don't know what I want to say, I just can't find the time to get it done, so I really need your prayers in this. But the book that I am writing is on Kingdom Authority. The title of the book is *The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority*. The subtitle is *Getting an Upper Hand on the Underworld*. And the basic underlying principle of that book is this: that you will never be over those things that God wants to be under you until you're under those things that God has put over you. God does not give authority to rebels, and we have to be submissive to God. And in the life of the Lord Jesus, he says this, God the Father said, "...this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." God the Son says, "I do always those things that please Him." "...being led of the Spirit, He went into the wilderness." And I could show you, many other places in this same fourth chapter where Jesus is the submissive Son. Victory is not for rebels.

### **C. The Principle of Spiritual Endowment**

Now here's the third principle, and are you, are you tracking with me so far? Are you saved and are you submissive? Now here's the third principle. There's the principle of spiritual endowment, the principle of spiritual endowment. It is not enough to be saved. It is not enough to be surrendered. You need to be strengthened to do what you want to do and really have surrendered to do. Now it's quite obvious that Jesus here is being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Let me just give you some places that I marked in my Bible. For example, in verse, chapter 3, verse 22, the Holy Spirit came upon the Lord Jesus. Then look in chapter 4, verse 1: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost..." Look in chapter 4, verse 14: "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit unto Galilee..." Look, if you will, in chapter 4, verse 18. Jesus stands up to preach and He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach...." Now the principle is clear, that Jesus is anointed, empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. Now if Jesus is empowered by the Holy Spirit of God, and that's the way He overcomes, that's the way I am to overcome. Now many times we say, "Well, sure, Jesus overcame Satan in the wilderness because He's God, but I'm only a man." Listen carefully. Jesus did not overcome Satan because He was God; He overcame Satan because He was man filled with the Holy Ghost. If He overcame Satan because He is God, He's no example to me. I would say, "Well, sure, You're God." The only way He can be an example to me is to be the kind of a man that I need to be and I ought to be. Jesus said, "I do nothing of myself." Jesus, in His humanity, voluntarily emptied Himself of the prerogatives that

were rightly His as God, the very God, and not as God, but as man filled with the Holy Ghost overcame the devil. And the same power that was available to the Lord Jesus Christ is available to you. When I am willing to be to Jesus what Jesus was to the Father, Jesus is willing to be to me what the Father was to Jesus. There is the principle of spiritual endowment. Now, if you're not filled with the Spirit, you're not going to have victory day by day. There's the, the principle of sonship, the principle of submission, the principle of the Spirit, spiritual endowment, and it's foolish and it is wicked to try and overcome the devil without the Holy Spirit in you. I love 1 John 4, verse 4: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them—talking about the powers of Satan—because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

#### **D. The Principle of Scripture**

Now here's the next principle, and it is the principle of Scripture. Follow along. sonship, submission, Spirit, Scripture. When you are a son of God, when you're submitted, you're filled with the Spirit, and then what does the Holy Spirit of God do? The Holy Spirit of God uses the Word of God, which is what? The sword of the Spirit. Now I want you to see how Jesus used, the Scripture against Satan. Look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 4, after he's said turn the stones into bread. "Jesus answering, saying, It is written." What He's doing now is quoting the Book of Deuteronomy. "...It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Skip on down to verse 8: "And Jesus answered, and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written..." Look down at verse 12: "And Jesus, answering, said unto him, It is said—and when it says 'it is said,' it means it is said in the Scripture—Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God..."

Now, when Satan comes against you don't argue with him. He's not worth it. Take the sword of the Spirit and run him through. That's what Jesus did. Jesus just unsheathed the sword, and said, "Take that. It is written." He skewered him on the Word of God. Now remember, it is the Spirit's sword. Merely quoting the Scripture will not give you victory. You can have a head full of Scripture and go down. It is the sword of the Spirit, and the Spirit must wield His sword, and the Spirit will wield His sword when you're filled with the Spirit. And you're not going to be filled with the Spirit until you are submitted, and you're not going to be submitted until you're saved. There's the Spirit. There's the principle of sonship, submission, Holy Spirit fullness, and then Scripture, as you take the Word of God. Now, put down 1 John 2, verse 14: "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one, the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." Many Christians are merely playing at Bible study and, therefore, they have no real victory.

### **E. The Principle of Satisfaction**

Now let me give you, the last principle here, and it's the principle of satisfaction. Now what do I mean by the principle of satisfaction? Well, if you can find satisfaction in the legitimate way, you don't have to seek for it in an illegitimate way. You see, Satan is a pervert. I say that thoughtfully. He is a pervert. Satan has no raw material. All Satan can do is to take that which God has created, and God created how much? Everything. So all Satan can do is to take what God has created and pervert it and give you an illegitimate desire. For example, he said, "Turn these stones into bread." What is that? That is a perversion of a God-given appetite. Hunger is a gift of God. It's what keeps us alive, and, but what, what Satan was trying to do was to get Jesus to satisfy a legitimate desire—listen—in an illegitimate way. Or think again, the kingdoms of this world, "I'll give you all of the kingdoms of this world." Well, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. What, what was the temptation? To acquire a lawful heritage in an unlawful way. It was something good that is perverted. Or again, he says to him, "Cast yourself down into the temple." That is to accomplish a spiritual goal in an unspiritual way. Do the right thing, but do it the wrong way. What I'm trying to say is that Satan is such a pervert. Now, how do you deal with this? Well, when you have a desire to do something to satisfy a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way, the way to handle that is to satisfy the legitimate desire the legitimate way. And then the devil has no, you have no itch the devil can scratch. Does that make sense? For example, you stay in love with your own wife, you're not going to run around with somebody else's wife. That's a plain example of what I'm talking about. You be desperately in love with the one that God has given you, and satisfy your cravings and your desire in a legitimate way, and this, this is true.

Now we said, look, that, that, there's the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The lust of the flesh is doing. Well, you want to do something? Hey, do you know what the ultimate in doing is? Is serving Jesus. Now you say, "Oh, that sounds so pious." No, I mean it—I mean it. There is no greater thrill than to be a servant of Almighty God. Can you think of that? Give God a hand if you want to do it. Food, sleep, play—they take second place to serving God, but I'm going to tell you this. Food and sleep and play become all the more meaningful when Jesus is in first place. He doesn't take those things from you; He enriches those things.

And, and again, having. There's nothing wrong with having, but if you could only understand that in Jesus you have everything. You know, the Bible says all things are yours. How much is that? That's it. All things are you. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now if this ever gets into our head. How can the devil tempt us with his trinkets and offer us his gaudy kingdoms when we have a part of the kingdom of heaven? We have treasure that rust cannot consume, moths cannot

consume, and thieves can't take away, treasure laid up for us in heaven.

And then, not only in the area of our passions, and our possessions, but also in the area of our pride. You see, we all have a desire to be somebody. If you tell me that you don't want significance, I'm going to tell you, you are lying. You do want significance. What greater significance can you have than to be a child of God? You know, the Bible says we are a kingdom of priests. Look up here. Look at me. You're looking at Prince Adrian, King Adrian. That's who I am. "Well," you say, "you think you're hot." No. So are you. You're a king, a priest. We are somebody. Friend, that is doing. That is having. That is being. And when you see who you are, when you see the riches of Christ, greater treasure than all the treasures of Egypt, as Moses did, then the devil doesn't have any itch that he can scratch you with. Jesus knew who He was. He said, "The devil comes, but he finds nothing in me." That is, he's not going to tempt Me with these things because I know who I am, I know what I do, I know what I have.

## **Conclusion**

So you take those five principles and tell me, after you try them, whether or not they work. And if you say they won't work, I'm going to tell you, I'm going to look you straight in the face and say, you haven't tried it, you haven't done it. I'll tell you, as sure as I'm standing here, that you get saved, you get surrendered, wanting to do the will of God more than anything else, you get Spirit-filled, you arm yourself with the Word of God, and let Jesus be your all in all, your passion, your possession, and your position, and the devil is going down and you're going up, as surely as I'm standing here.

Let's pray. Father, I thank You that Jesus is at the same time our example and our power. Lord, help us to follow in His footsteps and to live victoriously as He's taught us to do. In His holy name I pray. Amen.

# How to Handle Temptation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 12, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 4:1–2

*“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.”*

LUKE 4:1–2

## Outline

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  - A. Temptation Can Come to Any Person
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    1. The Lust of the Flesh
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word that we sang about this morning and find if you would Luke chapter 4 and we're going to be talking today about how to handle temptation. While you're finding it, let me tell you this. In football they say when you throw a pass, three things can happen—two of them are bad. In handling temptation, there are three ways that people try to deal with temptation, two of them are wrong.

One way that people deal with temptation is simply to give in to it. They're not bothered by temptation because they do what they want to do when they want to do it. They're like animals and we have a lot of people who are living like intelligent animals, really not so intelligent. An animal lives for self-gratification, self-propagation, self-preservation. An animal does what it wants to do when it wants to do it. It eats when it

wants to eat, it sleeps when it wants to sleep, it does what it wants to do, propagate when it wants to propagate. And so the way that some people deal with temptation is just simply give into it. They really don't even bother about what some of us would call, temptation. And, then the way that others deal with temptation is they try to fight it but they do it in the strength of their own flesh. And so they try and fail, they try, they fail, they try, they fail—and finally they're like that woman who said, I can overcome anything but temptation, and maybe you're that way. You've failed and struggled so much. There are three ways, however.

The third way is the way that we're going to look at this morning and that is to teach us to understand both the example and the power for overcoming Satanic temptation and we're going to find that in the story of the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ there in the wilderness. Because, friend, Jesus is our example and Jesus is our power. Now why should you and I study this? Well, we need to study it because, first of all, friend, there is an enemy—there is an enemy who would harm us.

Look if you will here in verses 1 and 2: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil." There is an enemy who would harm us. Now you may not understand that you have an enemy, but you have an enemy and he is a malevolent enemy and he wants to hurt you, harm you, and hurt and harm those you love and he has a plan, he has a strategy for your life. The dynamite is in place, the fuse is laid, the match is struck, you may be living high, wide, and handsome, but he's setting you up for a fall. You have an enemy who would harm us.

Now don't get so cocky about that. It's not that you're that important. Satan's real war is with God. And evil persons have always known that if you can't get at somebody, get at somebody that somebody loves and you've gotten at them anyway. And so Satan wants to get at God by getting at you because God loves you. There is an enemy that would harm you.

Another reason we need to study today is not only the enemy that would harm us, but the experience that humbles us. I mean, most of us have failed and failed and failed and failed and we're, we're sick and tired of failing. We read about victory, we sing about oh victory in Jesus, but how many Christians do you know who are really living in victorious life day after day after day, not being overcome but being over comers, not being victims but being victors.

The enemy that would harm us, experience that humbles us, and the example that helps us. O friend, we need to study this because we're going to find out what Jesus did when Jesus was tempted. And I want to say again, listen to me very carefully, that Jesus is both your example and He is your power. The Bible teaches that God gave us an example in the Lord Jesus and we are to walk as He walked. So we're going to study

what happened to the Lord Jesus when Jesus had a head-on collision with the devil and how He came out of the wilderness victorious and we're going to learn some lessons today and I pray God that God the Holy Spirit will write this upon your heart so that you will begin to live a victorious life.

## **I. The Possibility of Temptation**

Now, let's think for just a moment about the possibility of temptation. Notice again verses 1 and 2: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil." Now it wasn't just one temptation, for forty days He was tempted. "And in those days he did eat nothing and when they were ended he afterward hungered." Now the Bible is completely inspired, but that almost sounds like an understatement. He fasted for forty days and then He was hungry. Yes, indeed, He was hungry and all of the artillery of hell was aimed at the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **A. Temptation Can Come to Any Person**

Now I'm talking to you about the possibility of temptation. Here's the first thing I want you to understand. Temptation can come to any person. Temptation can come to any person. Don't think that when you get saved suddenly you have become immune to temptation. If the devil had the unmitigated gall, if the devil had the audacity to tempt the very Son of God, don't you think he would tempt you? Do you think that somehow that you are immune? Jesus was tempted.

Now if you think that you're not gonna be tempted, do you know what you're doing? You are tempting the devil to tempt you. The proud Christian tempts the devil to tempt him. The Bible clearly says, and you may put this in your margin, 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verses 12 and 13: "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." You will be tempted, there is a way to overcome, and we need to understand that.

But put it down big, plain, and straight, temptation may come to any person. There's not a mother's child in this building that cannot and is not tempted. To be tempted is not a sin. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are and the Bible says He was yet without sin. Don't get the idea that there must be something inherently wrong in you if you have temptations. There is something inherently right in you if you have temptations because it means that you are in, not in collusion with the devil but in collision with the devil. And so temptation may come, number one, to any person. Have you got that?

## **B. Temptation Can Come at Any Period**

Now let me say something else about temptation. Not only may it come to any person, but it can come in any period—it can come in any period. Now look if you will again in verse 1: "Now Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan." Well, what was happening in Jordan? Well, if you'll go back to chapter 3, you'll find that Jesus had just been baptized. It was, no pun intended, the high water mark of His early ministry. The Lord Jesus has been down in Jordan, He's baptized of John the Baptist, He comes up straightway out of the water, there comes a voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and the Spirit like a dove descended upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, after the dove, the devil. Think about it.

Did you know that some of your greatest temptations will come after some of your highest spiritual experiences? Did you know that? Did you know that temptation can come at any period? Sometimes people get in trouble because they've been in a revival meeting and they've been so wonderfully gloriously blessed, they begin to praise God and then they begin to coast. Sometimes ministers will testify they'll get in some of the biggest arguments with their wife right after one of the most glorious revival meetings the church has ever known—just because Satan comes to counterattack. It can come at any time. When you have the approval of heaven, you're going to have the assault of hell.

And you can study the men in the Bible who were tempted sorely after great victories. Elijah, after he saw 450 prophets defeated on Mount Carmel, he called down fire from heaven, and then you see Elijah, backslidden, tempted, running from one woman, Jezebel. You see, Moses, Moses had just seen a great victory leading the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground. What an incredible experience. Later on you see Moses out there in the wilderness asking God to kill him, just like Elijah asked God to kill him. You can study in the Bible, you can find old Jonah. Jonah had been in a revival meeting and he saw an entire city about the size of Memphis, Tennessee, repent in sackcloth and ashes, Nineveh, and then Jonah, he got so backslidden, he sat under a gourd vine and he requested that he might die. Think about it. All of these people had great spiritual experiences.

## **C. Temptation Can Come in Any Place**

Put it down: temptation can come to any person. Put it down: temptation can come in any period. Put it down: temptation can come in any place. Now here is the Lord Jesus down in the wilderness. Jesus is the last Adam. Jesus was tempted in a wilderness and Jesus overcame. Adam was tempted in a garden and Adam fell. The first Adam fell in the garden; the second Adam overcame in the wilderness.

Now Satan doesn't care whether he comes to you in a garden or in the wilderness. Don't get the idea that you can isolate and insulate yourself from temptation. You know, every now and then someone gets the idea, well, you know, I'd just like to quit this job

where all these obscene jokes and gambling and profanity and dog-eat-dog, I'd just like to get in a church where everything would just get so holy and I wouldn't get any more temptation.

Sometimes people go all the way to a monastery and they find out you know, they, they, they go to fast and pray and get off in some cliff, some hole in the rock, and they find out there's no holiness in the hole. You cannot, you cannot escape temptation by being in any place.

#### **D. Temptation Can Come at Any Point**

Temptation may come to any person—it came to Jesus. It may come in any period; it came after His baptism. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. It may come in any place, whether it be in a garden, or whether it be in a wilderness. Friend, we need to be forewarned and it may come at any point, any point.

Jesus was tempted. Look if you will again at this, verse 2: "And being forty days tempted of the devil." Well how was Jesus tempted? Well put in your Bible Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15, and it speaks of Jesus, it calls Him our high priest. And it says, "For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our, infirmities." That is, he knows our weakness, he is touched, he sees how weak we are, because he goes on to say, "But was in all points tempted like as we are." Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are.

Now that may shock you to know that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, but that's what the Bible says. Temptation may come to any person, it may come in any period, it may come in any place, it may come at any point. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. You mean, Pastor, the devil was tempted to smoke dope, the devil was tempted to run a red light? Of course not! No, no. He's not talking here about individual instances of temptation; he's talking about the great major points of temptation. There are only three, and the devil threw all three of these at Jesus in the wilderness, the same three that you will face this afternoon and tomorrow morning and the rest of your life.

Now what are these points of temptation? The incidentals may vary, but put this down in your Bibles also. First John chapter 2 verse 16. Now listen to it: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the father, but is of the world." Now you say, that's all that's in the world? I mean that sums it up; that's it. You want me to tell you what temptation is? Temptation is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.

Every temptation that you face is a component of one of these. It may be a synchronism of all three, it may be one of these individually, it may be two of them, but every temptation is made up of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And you're going to find out, that's exactly how Satan tempted Jesus in the

wilderness and that's the reason the writer of Hebrews says He was tempted in all points like as we and yet without sin.

### **1. The Lust of the Flesh**

Now, let's analyze these a little bit. What is the lust of the flesh? Well, that's, that's the sins that we do with our bodies. Now the flesh is not evil, but it can be made an operation of evil. That's called the lust of the flesh. That deals in the area of physical appetites and actions, food, sex, liquor, rest, laziness, violence. All of these things are in the body. Now the Bible calls that the lust, the desires of the flesh. It deals primarily with the area of doing, got that? Doing.

### **2. The Lust of the Eyes**

Now, what about the lust of the eyes? Did you know your eyes have an appetite just like your body has an appetite? The lust of the eyes. Have you ever heard anybody say, Feast your eyes upon that? The lust of the eyes does not deal with doing, the lust of the eyes deals with having, having. It means just things that will satisfy the aesthetic, values, whatever values you may have that you may feast upon and feed your eyes upon. Now, so if the lust of the flesh deals with doing, the lust of the eyes deals, with, having, the lust of the flesh is primarily against the body, the lust of the eyes is a temptation against the soul, the inner person.

### **3. The Pride of Life**

And then, the pride of life. That doesn't deal with doing or having, but it deals with being. Be somebody; be a big-shot; be a hot-shot; have authority; have power; have respect; be famous; get everybody's attention turned to you. Doing, having, being. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. The first, the lust of the flesh, that deals with our passions. The lust of the eyes, that deals with our possessions. The pride of life, that deals with our person, with who we are. And the Bible says that Jesus Christ was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin.

How did Jesus overcome these temptations? What were these temptations that Jesus had? Well think about it. What was the lust of the flesh? Well, that was to turn stones into bread. Look at it if you will here in verses 3 and 4, and the devil said unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered Him, saying, It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

I love the music this morning. Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, a, a light to my feet, a lamp and a light. You see what, what Satan said to Jesus was this. Jesus, you're hungry. You have miracle power—turn this stone into bread. By the way, if you have ever traveled Israel, you'll find the ground is covered with little brown stones about this big that look exactly like a loaf of bread. It was incredible, you would think that you could

put them in the, in the, in the market and, till people touched them they would absolutely think that it's a loaf of bread. He's working on the imagination of the Lord Jesus and he says, Turn these stones into bread.

Now what does that mean to you? What would that say to you? Make a god of your passions, whether it would be food, sleep, sex, liquor, games, whatever. That deals with doing, the lust of the flesh. Now listen. There's nothing wrong with eating bread. Jesus fed His disciples bread, Jesus took bread and said, "This is my body which is broken for you." Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." But what was this temptation? To put the desire of His flesh above the will of God. Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to fast; He was there by divine appointment.

What is sin? Sin is the misuse and the abuse of something that is normally right and good. Every sin is only a perversion of that which is good. So what he was saying to Jesus was put bread above the will of God. And that's what he might say to you—in anything that may be normally good. But if you put it above the will of God then it becomes sin because what does the Bible say in Matthew chapter 6 verse 33? You remember that? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." This was a temptation, just to put things, bread, above the will of God, to put God in second place. God will not take second place. And so you're going to be tempted tomorrow with the lust of the flesh. That doesn't mean that you're going to be tempted to go down to one of these casinos, God forbid, but there will come to you tomorrow temptations to put your things that you want to do above the will of God. All right, that's the lust of the flesh.

And how else did the devil tempt the Lord Jesus? With the lust of the eyes. Look in verses 5 through 8 of this same chapter. "And the devil taketh him up into a high mountain and showed unto him," that's the lust of the eyes, "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will give it. And if thou, therefore, will worship me, all shall be thing," that is, you're going to have possessions. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." That's the lust of the eyes. And the devil makes some big offers; he made a big offer to Jesus. Adam, the first Adam, had turned it all over to Satan and Satan says, Jesus, I'll give it back to you if you'll just worship me. Jesus knew better than that. Now it's not wrong to have things!

Passions are not wrong, possessions are not wrong. Doing is not wrong and having is not wrong. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "It's the Lord thy God that giveth thee poverty and wealth." The Bible says, "Thou shalt not steal." That is, don't take from another person that which is rightfully his.

But I'll tell you what else the Bible says, 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 10—listen to it. "For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after they erred from the faith and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Let's find out if the devil's been working on you. What are your personal goals? I mean, what consumes you? What do you think about? What are your greatest energies directed toward? Buying a house, retirement, getting an automobile, a particular vacation, so-called security, is that the thing that is most important to you? You say, Pastor, there's nothing wrong with that. No, there is nothing wrong with that, unless that's what consumes you.

Are you more consumed with that or are you more consumed with the character of your children? Are you consumed with growing in Christ? Are you consumed with getting out the gospel of Jesus Christ? You see how the devil can take something that's good in second place, put it in first place and then make it bad? Let me ask you a question. This'll be a hard one to answer, so don't answer it out loud. Is there any material possession that you own that you would not gladly depart with for the glory of Jesus Christ? Is there any material possession that you have that you would not gladly relinquish for the glory of Jesus Christ?

Now, just worship Satan, and anytime you don't put God first you're worshipping Satan. Just worship Satan, and all this will be yours. That deals with possessions. Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, but folks, listen, people will sell out for a whole lot more than that. Judas sold out for thirty pieces of silver, Esau for a mess of pottage. I believe there are some people who would give up coming to church before they'd give up getting a new refrigerator. People are so materialistic. That's the lust of the eyes and we all face it every day.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and then the pride of life. Begin now in verse 9, and see what Satan did to the Lord Jesus. You see, he's trying and he brought Him to Jerusalem and sat Him on the pinnacle of the temple and "said unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee, and in their hands shall he bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against the stone. And Jesus, answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Now what was this? Well, in the Old Testament it said, "The Lord that you seek will come suddenly through his temple." Now Jesus was the Messiah, He was the Son of God and what Satan is saying is this, Jesus, what you need to do is to really make a dramatic entrance. What you need to do is to get up on that highest point of the temple and just, just step out. Now don't worry, Jesus, because the Bible says he'll send an angel escort, those angels will swoop under you, they will gird you up, and you will come with an angel escort, right down into the temple.

You know, He didn't come that way. He came riding on a donkey, didn't He? A humble jackass. But he said, Oh, get an angel escort, that's what Satan says, and you just come wafting your way down and angels will deliver you, they'll ride to the court of the temple and all of the people will say, Look at that, and Jesus, won't you feel proud? Won't you be somebody? See, that's the pride of life.

Well, you say, I don't face temptations like that. Oh, yes, you do, every day. I mean, why do you think people have to have a brand new set of clothes every year? Well, to let everybody look at them. They don't need new clothes necessarily. Why do you think these car dealers, and we have some wonderful ones in our church, why do you think the manufacturer will put a big ad in the paper that says, Drive the car that'll make your neighbors envious? Why do you think that you get stuff in the mail from advertisers that'll say something like this: Dear Mr. Rogers, your name is on several mailing lists in which you are classified as being highly literate, progressive, interested in world affairs, good literature and science? Therefore, I know you will be interested in what I have to say. Well of course I will, since he described me perfectly. I mean, you don't think they, how they lure, to deal with this called the pride of life. It happens.

Why do you think people gossip? The pride of life. You know what gossip is? Gossip is an attempt to pull somebody down hoping that you will elevate yourself above them. Why do you think that people have made a god out of their business? Not because they need more money, they only eat one meal at a time, sleep on one bed at a time, live in one room at a time, I don't care how fine it is, they're not making money, they're keeping score. I mean, it's a game with them and they've got to be on top. It is absolutely the pride of life. Why do you think many people drink? Well, you say they drink because of the feeling they get. Well what is the feeling they get? They are ten feet tall. They think they're smart, they think they're humorous, they think they're well liked. Somebody ought to make a movie of them and show them the next day what they were, but they feel that way for a moment. They're big—they're big.

Now folks, the Bible says Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, doing, having, being, passions, possessions, pride. Got it? Okay, now. It can take a myriad of forms, but your temptations are not new. That's the reason the apostle Paul said, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Say, oh, I've got a special temptation. No, you don't. Yours is an ordinary garden-variety temptation.

## **II. The Principles of Triumph**

Now, very quickly, very quickly, I want to give you some principles and show you how Jesus overcame the devil and I want you write these down and then you're going to find out. We've talked about the possibility of temptation, now let's talk about the principles

of triumph.

### A. **The Principle of Sonship**

First of all, there's the principle of sonship. Go back to chapter 3 and look if you will in verse 22. Look at it. Well, let's start in verse 21: "And when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized and praying the heaven was open and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."

The starting place is to be a son, a daughter of God, that's the starting place. You say, but listen, that was Jesus—that was Jesus. That also ought to be you. Listen, the Bible says, Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God, the children of God. You see, Jesus' favorite term for himself was what, the Son of man. He was the Son of God, but He didn't call himself the Son of God. Jesus called himself the Son of man. Why did Jesus Christ call himself the Son of man? To identify with us.

You see, Jesus became the Son of man that we might become sons of God. Jesus was born of a virgin that we might be born again and, and Jesus is showing us not how to overcome Satan as God would overcome him, but how to overcome Satan as man would overcome him being born of God. Do you understand that you've got to be saved, you've got to be born again? Folks, you don't have a chance, you don't have half a hallelujah, you might as well be throwing snowballs at the Rock of Gibraltar than to try to overcome Satan without being born again. You've got to know the Lord Jesus Christ. So there's the principle of sonship. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?

### B. **The Principle of Submission**

Second principle, the principle of submission. Now that verse I just read to you, it said this: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Well why was the Father well pleased with the Son? Because the Lord Jesus said, "I do always those things that please him." I am submitted to the will of my Father. I want to ask you a forthright right question. Is the consuming desire of your heart to do the will of God? Can God look at you right now this moment and say, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased? Are you submitted to God's will, do you really want to know God's will, or do you just simply want to escape temptation and do your will? Now I'm telling you, as plainly as I can tell you, that victory is not for rebels, and unless you have bound the knee to the Lordship of Jesus, unless you have made God sovereign in your life, that God can say about you or say about me, He, she, is my beloved son, my beloved daughter, in whom I'm real pleased, there's no real hope for you to overcome Satan.

### C. **The Principle of Spiritual Endowment**

Now here's the third thing. Not only sonship, not only submission, but there is the

principle of spiritual endowment. Now notice chapter 4 and verse 1. Look at it again. The Bible says, "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost." Do you see that? Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost. Look if you will in chapter 4 and verse 14: "And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit." Look if you will in what He said in verse 18: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me."

It's obvious—it's obvious. Jesus did not overcome Satan as God, though He was God and is God. Jesus overcame Satan as man filled with the Spirit. Now if He didn't overcome Satan as man filled with the Spirit, He could be no example to me, He could pull rank on me. I mean, what good would it do if He said, I'm God, you're a man, you be like me. I say, I can't. But what if He says, You're man and I'm man and I'm filled with the Spirit and you be filled with the Spirit. Then I say, Yes, I can. Jesus overcame Satan not with the inherent power that He had as Almighty God, but as a man filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the reason the Bible commands us to be being filled with the Spirit of God. And the Lord Jesus was filled with the Spirit and we need to be filled with the Spirit.

As I was studying this passage I came to 1 John 4, verse 4, "Ye are God's little children and have overcome them because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." Here's the fourth principle and I'm rushing now.

#### **D. The Principle of Scripture**

All right, remember sonship, remember submission, remember the Spirit, and now here's the next one, Scripture—Scripture—the principle of Scripture.

Look if you will in chapter 4, verse 4: "And Jesus answered, saying, It is written." Look if you will again in verse 8: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written." Look if you will in verse 12: "And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said." And what He meant, it is said in the Word of God. Now when Satan came against the Lord Jesus, Jesus, a submissive Son of Almighty God, Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, then took the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God and when Satan came with that temptation, Jesus ran him through with the Word. It is written. You have an idea as you read this that Jesus must've been having His quiet time in the book of Deuteronomy. He's quoting the book of Deuteronomy. The Bible says that the Bible is the sword of the Spirit and it's time that some of us learned to unsheathe the sword and use it. You don't even know it to use it, so you need to get in the Word of God. There's another verse I found, 1 John 2, verse 14: "I've written unto you fathers because you have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you young men because you are strong and the Word of God abideth in you and ye have overcome the wicked one."

## **E. The Principle of Satisfaction**

Now here's the final thing that we have time for this morning, and it is the principle of satisfaction, the principle of satisfaction. You know what Jesus said about the devil, the devil comes and he finds nothing in me. What did Jesus mean by that? Jesus meant that Satan could offer Him anything he wanted—Jesus had no itch that the devil could scratch.

The devil said, Turn these stones into bread. Well Jesus had meat to eat that they knew not of. He said, "Man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Jesus was satisfied already. Satan said I'll give you the kingdoms of this world. What was that? A temptation to obtain a lawful heritage in an unlawful way. Jesus knew what He had. Jesus knew the prophecies, the kingdoms of the world all become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. He didn't have to take a short cut. Fall down from the temple. Jesus didn't have to do that, He knew that He came from God, He knew that He was going to God, He already had it.

## **Conclusion**

You see, what is temptation? Temptation is from Satan to satisfy a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way. Friend, you don't have to do that. Understand who you are in the Lord Jesus Christ and the devil says, Hey, satisfy your passions. I'll tell him I'm satisfying my passions serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen, it is a thrill to serve Jesus. Anything else is second place.

That deals with doing. Hey, friend, the Bible says all things are yours. The meek shall inherit the earth. What do we have in the Lord Jesus Christ? Who would give up diamonds for dirt? And being. Look up here. Now I don't say it arrogantly, but you know who you're looking at? A prince, a king, royalty, next of kin to the holy Trinity. Jesus is not ashamed to call me His brother. The devil is a dirty liar. You need to understand what you have in the Lord Jesus. You see, Jesus knew who He was. There was the principle of satisfaction. He knew who He was, what He had, and where He was going. And so He wasn't susceptible to this flim-flam artist, this dirty liar, this filthy devil. Sonship, submission, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, knowing who you are in the Lord Jesus. And Jesus is both the example and the power to do that. And God's people said, Amen. Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Let's start with that first one right now. Sonship, becoming a son, a daughter of God. If you've never yet received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, I want to guide you in that decision. Would you open your heart and pray this way right now. Dear God, just pray out of your heart. I need you. Give me the courage and the strength to trust you in my heart and confess you openly. Help me, Lord Jesus, not to be ashamed of you today. I need to get it settled. Amen.

# How to Overcome Temptation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 25, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 4:1–12**

*“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”*

LUKE 4:1

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, the music all day has just been glorious, has it not?

Find Luke chapter 4. I want to talk to you tonight about how to overcome temptation. Now don't tell me that you don't have a problem with temptation. You've never arrived to a place where you're more holy than the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus was tempted. And if you've never met the devil, it's because you and the devil have been going in the same direction. You turn around and rather than being in collusion with him you're going to be in collision with him. You're going to be tempted.

Now, generally, man tries to deal with temptation one of three ways: sometimes he just deals with it by giving in to it, like the lady who said, “I can overcome anything but temptation.” Then there are other people who fight temptation in the strength of their

flesh. They fight and fail. But, of course, the Bible teaches there is a way to live victoriously. “There has no temptation taken you—the world has no allurements, the flesh has no residual power, the devil has no authority—listen—that you cannot overcome. You ought to live, I ought to live, day by day, in victory.

Now look, if you will, in Luke chapter 4, verses 1: “And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil...” Now let me tell you why the message tonight is very pertinent.

### **A. An Enemy Who Would Harm You**

First of all, there is an enemy who would harm you. The Bible here speaks of the devil in verse 2.

I went to a Baptist college in Florida, but it was already becoming a liberal college. I majored in religion, and I was taught in that college there is no such thing as a personal devil, that the devil is somehow a personification of evil, that, somehow, men have tried to explain evil and so they have personified the evil, perhaps the evil that is in them, and they call that the devil. Well, friend, what evil was there in the Lord Jesus that He personified, would you tell me that? No. I read in the Bible where Jesus commanded some demons to go into some hogs, 2,000 hogs. They ran a down a steep place into the sea and committed hogicide. Now I want to ask you a question: Was that a figment of imagination? Was that a personification of evil? No, it was evil. There is a devil, a real, genuine adversary, the devil. And you have an adversary. Look, you have an adversary. You're not exempt. He's already made plans to sabotage your life. The dynamite's in place, the fuse is laid, the match is struck—and we just go merrily on.

### **B. An Experience That Should Humble You**

Why should we pay attention to the message tonight? Because, friend, of the devil who would harm us. Number two: The experience that should humble us. We have already failed, most of us. And many of us, if we'd think right now, think of some area that we are failing in, time and time again we've failed enough to be humble and say, “Dear God, if I have an enemy that would harm me and experience that humbles me, maybe I ought to pay attention tonight to what the pastor has to say.”

### **C. An Example That Should Help Us**

But not only is there the enemy that would harm us, and the experience that would humble us, friend, there is an example to help us. It's right here. We're going to learn from the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ and how He overcame Satan, how, therefore, how we can overcome Satan. Now listen. Jesus is at the same time our example and our power in the matter of temptation. He's the example. He shows us how He Himself overcame the temptation, but He is also the power that you and I need

for overcome temptation. So, therefore, we're going to look at this passage of Scripture.

## **I. The Possibility of Temptation**

Now before we get into the principles that I want to give you tonight, let me just tell you something about temptation.

### **A. Temptation May Come to Any Person**

Number one: It may come to any person. Look again in verse, chapter 4, verse 1: "And Jesus, and Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil..." The Lord Jesus was tempted. Now if the devil had the unmitigated gall and audacity to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ, if he tempted Jesus, do you think somehow that he's going to overlook you? The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 16 that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. The theologians have raced their engines to try to figure out could Jesus have sinned. No, He could not have sinned, impossible for Jesus to have sinned. Well, you say, "Then, Pastor Rogers, was the temptation real?" The temptation was very real. But the temptation was not given to show that He could sin, but to show that He could not sin. Imagine, a railroad trestle built, a bridge. The engineers engineer it with steel and all of the specifications. And then when the bridge is completed, they bring five locomotives out and put them on that railroad bridge and rev them up and let them vibrate. What are they trying to do, show the bridge can fall? No, they're showing that the bridge cannot fall. Was the test real? Absolutely. Was the temptation of Jesus real? Yes. Jesus was tempted, and you can be tempted, and a careless Christian tempts the devil to tempt him. Let me say that again. A careless Christian tempts the devil to tempt him. Here's a Scripture for you: 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verses 12 through 13: "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Now if you think tonight that the message is for your brother, your sister, your neighbor, you're headed for trouble. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as its common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, that you maybe able to bear it." The point is temptation may come to any person.

### **B. Temptation May Come at Any Period**

Second thing, the temptation may come at any period. Look again at chapter 4, verse 1: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Now what was He doing down in Jordan? He'd just been baptized. This is right after His baptism, and now He's being tempted. Now you see,

what happened at His baptism was a remarkably, wonderful, spiritual experience. You're in chapter 4. Go back to chapter 3 and look in verse 22, if you will, and see what it says here about what happened to the Lord Jesus Christ. "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased." What a glorious experience. I mean, the heavens opened, the Spirit descending upon the Lord Jesus, a voice from the glory. He is anointed with the Holy Ghost. And now He's tempted. You would expect a temptation to come in a moment of weakness, but not necessarily. There's a principle you might call the devil after the dove. He's anointed with the Holy Ghost in chapter 3. He's tempted by the devil in chapter 4.

You know what I've found out? Some of my greatest temptations come after some of my highest spiritual experiences. I found out that I can get in an argument with Joyce on the way home from a revival meeting. Now I didn't say she'd get in an argument with me. I said I get in one with her. She's more holy than I. I found out that in unusual times, when perhaps our spirits are high and our guard is low, we are tempted of the devil. Now it makes sense. If God has blessed us, don't you expect the devil to counter attack? Leonard Ravenhill said, "When the devil, when God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil will open the doors of hell to blast us."

### **C. Temptation May Come in Any Place**

Temptation may come to any person. It came to Jesus. It may come at any period, after some great spiritual experience even. It can come in any place. Look again in verse 1: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and being forty days tempted of the devil..." Jesus had a temptation that took place in the wilderness and we're going to see He was victorious. The first Adam was tempted in a garden and he fell. The devil will tempt you in the garden. He'll tempt you in the desert. He'll tempt you any place, and there's no place that is safe from temptation. This is one of the errors of the social gospel. Some people have the idea that if we can change the environment that we can remove the temptation. Man fell in the Garden of Eden. Now I believe in a spiritual environment. I believe in a good environment, and I want to keep my children in the best environment and stay in a good environment, but environment is not the answer alone. Again, Jesus overcame in the wilderness, and Adam fell in a garden. Nobody should willingly put himself in temptation. We should pray that the Lord would deliver us from temptation,

### **D. Temptation May Come at Any Point**

But put it down, temptation can come to any person. Temptation can come at any period. Temptation can come in any place. And temptation can come at any point, at any point. Now we've already referenced, Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15, that says that

Jesus was tempted in all points like we. Let me read that scripture. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus was tempted in all points just like we are. He was not excluded. He knew every temptation that we know. Not every kind of temptation. Jesus was not tempted to smoke marijuana. He was not tempted, to drive through a school zone at 90 miles an hour. But He was tempted in all points. You see, that’s the reason the Bible says over there in Corinthians, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as in common to man...” Don’t get the idea that your temptation is rare. Your temptation is a garden-variety temptation. Put down in your margin 1 John chapter 2 and verse 16: “For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Now if you’re tempted, you’re going to be tempted by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. That’s every point. Jesus was tempted in every point that’s mentioned right here in 1 John 2, verse 16.

Now the lust of the flesh, that’s an attack on the body. It deals with doing. Number two, the lust of the eyes, or the lust of the eyes, is an attack not on the body, but on the soul. It deals not with doing, but with having. And then the pride of life deals not with doing or having, but with being. It’s an attack on the spirit.

Now the attack, Satan may come with an attack on your body, the lust of the flesh. He may come with an attack on your soul, the lust of the eyes. He may come with an attack on your spirit, the pride of life. You see, the three-fold attack is in the, lust of the flesh—that’s the passions. The lust of the eyes—that’s possessions. The pride of life—that is in your person in pride itself. Now Jesus faced all of these temptations. That’s what the temptation experience in the wilderness is all about.

Now, for example, Satan here in this passage of Scripture, is coming against Jesus’ body with the lust of the flesh. Read verses 3 and 4: “And the devil said unto him,” well, lets begin in verse 2 again. “Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.” I’ve always thought that’s an understatement. He hungered. I mean, here’s forty days eating nothing in the wilderness, and He is famished. Now notice in verses 3 and 4: “And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God—and, actually, the sense of the Greek is since you’re the Son of God. You notice he gives Him that much—command this stone, that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Now what he is saying here is, “Jesus, you’re hungry. Satisfy your hunger, the lust of your flesh.” And the devil endeavors to make Jesus captive to his appetite. What he’s saying to Jesus is, “Make a god of your cravings.” This is a generation that’s tempted in the same way with food and sleep and sex and liquor and games. The Bible speaks of people like this in Philippians chapter 3

and verse 19. It speaks of those whose god is their belly. “Turn these stones into bread.” Now I want you to know there’s nothing wrong with bread. As a matter of fact, our Lord taught us to pray what? Give us this day our what? Our daily bread. The Lord Jesus fed His disciples with bread and fish. He took bread at the Last Supper and said, “This is my body which is broken for you—or given for you.” Nothing wrong with bread. But there, Jesus was there on a divine appointment, led of the Spirit, and what the devil was trying to do is to drive a wedge between him and this divine appointment by Jesus pampering His flesh. Now, again, there’s nothing wrong with bread.

What is sin? Sin is an abuse and a misuse of something good. Good things become bad things when they’re out of place. Good things become bad things when they are out of place. Matthew 6:33 says what? “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” But what Satan was saying to Jesus is, “Put things first. You hungry? Forget about fasting. Turn these stones into bread.” Now God will not take second place. If you put your meals, your rest, your television, your friends, or your fun, or anything else ahead of God, you’ve fallen for one of Satan’s ploys. All of these things may, in themselves, be harmless or good, but they cannot take first place. And so, now I want you to notice the nature of this temptation. It may come at any point. Here was a temptation of the flesh against the body, a temptation of passions, the temptation of doing. Well, Jesus doesn’t fall for that temptation. So Satan comes again. Now this time not with the, lust of the flesh, but with the lust of the eyes. Begin to read now in verse 5: “And the devil taketh him up unto an high mountain and showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered, and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

Now your eyes have an appetite just like your body has an appetite. There’s the lust of the flesh. There is also the lust of the eyes. He said, “Look, Jesus. See all of the kingdoms of the world. See the pomp, the circumstance, the glory, the wealth, the grandeur. It can all be yours if you’ll just bow down and worship me.” Well, Jesus knew better than that. But many of you, many of us sometimes fail in this area and we crucify Jesus on an altar of material things. Again, it’s not wrong to have things. It’s not wrong to acquire things. The Bible says, “It’s the Lord thy God that giveth thee power to get wealth.” And when God made this world and all of its beauty, God didn’t make it for the devil’s crowd. God made it for His people. But listen to this Scripture, 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 10: “For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” The lust of the flesh; wanting to acquire things at the expense of your spiritual

life.

May I ask you a question? What are your personal goals? I mean, what are you working toward? What are you striving for? Is it to have enough money to retire in comfort? I hope you do retire in comfort. But is that what consumes you? Are your personal goals to have more or to love God with all of your heart? What are your ambitions for your children? Is the burning desire of your heart for your children to be godly above everything else? If you were invited out to dinner, had you rather be invited to a dinner with the rich and the famous or the wise and the godly? Which would you rather spend an evening with?

Now, you see, the devil knows how to use these temptations on all of us. He used them on Jesus. He'll use them on us. Well, you say, "He's never offered me all the kingdoms of the world." Do you know why? He doesn't have to. It's amazing what people sell out for. Judas sold Jesus for what? Thirty pieces of silver. Esau gave up his birthright for a mess of pottage. I believe there are Baptists who would give up coming to church before they'd give up getting a new refrigerator. The material things of this world. Eve sold God out for a piece of fruit. That's the lust of the eyes.

And then the pride of life. The devil still doesn't give up. Notice, if we will, in chapter 4 now and verse 9 as we continue to read. "And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence; For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus, answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God." Now what was this temptation? It wasn't the lust of the flesh. It wasn't the lust of the eyes. It was the pride of life. "Jesus, make a spectacular entrance into the kingdom, into the temple. Wait until the courtyard is filled with people and then just step off and let the angels just float you down. Oh, they would bow at your feet then. They would say, Is not this the Messiah? Is not this spectacular? Make a grand and a glorious entrance. Show off." Now this didn't deal with, being. It didn't deal with having. Excuse me. It didn't deal with doing or having. It dealt with being. Be somebody important. Have you ever faced that temptation? Be a man of distinction. Madison Avenue knows how to get you. Drive the car that will make your neighbor envious. That's the reason that people want things. They, they don't want things because they need them; they want something to have more than somebody else.

Have you ever received an advertisement like this? Dear Mr. Rogers, Your name is on several mailing lists in which you are classified as being highly literate, progressive, interested in world affairs, good literature, and science. Therefore, I know you will be interested in what I have to say. Well, of course, I am, he described me perfectly. I mean, good night. Why shouldn't I read on? What, what he's doing is this. What they're

doing is this: just pandering to our pride. And we all wrestle with it. I wrestle with it and so do you. Now that's what the Bible means when it says over there in the Book of Hebrews that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life; doing, having, being; passions, possessions, and pride. Now it can come in many forms. It can be old. It can be modern. But the point I am making is that temptation can come to any person. Temptation can come in any period. Temptation can come at any point.

## **II. The Principles of Triumph over Temptation**

Now let's understand and see how Jesus overcame, because I remind you again that not only is Jesus our example, but He's also our power in overcoming temptation. All right. I want to give you some principles. These are principles that will help us not only to endure, but to triumph.

### **A. The Principle of Sonship**

Number one, and I'll illustrate these and let them begin with the letter S so you can remember them. The first principle is the principle of sonship—sonship. Now go back to chapter 3 and verse 22: “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him—that is, upon Jesus—and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased.” Now everybody in this building tonight is either a son of God or a son of Satan. Jesus said in John 8:44, to the unsaved, “You are of your father the devil...” Now if you're not twice born, it, I want to tell you, friend, if you've not been born into the family of God, we are by nature the children of wrath. Why did Jesus leave heaven and come to this earth? Why did the Son of God become the Son of man, that you and I might become the sons and daughters of God? We are born into His family. There can be no victory without the new birth. Jesus never had to be born again. He is the everlasting Son because the Father is the everlasting Father. But the principle is here that He is the Son of God and through Him we can have sonship. Now without the new birth you're not going to have victory. You've got to be born again. Are you born again? Have you been born into the family of God? Do you know that you know that you know that you've been twice born? The first principle is the principle of sonship.

### **B. The Principle of Submission**

Second principle is the principle of submission—submission. Now in chapter 3, verse 22, we read again about the Lord Jesus Christ, that He had the Holy Spirit to come upon Him, “...and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and there came a voice from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved Son—now watch this—in whom I am well pleased.” Now why do you think the Father was well

pleased with Him? I'll tell you why. He Himself told us. He said, "I do always those things that please Him." It's very obvious to see that Jesus Christ was submitted to the will of the Father. Go to chapter 4, verse 1: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan—now watch this—and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Here is somebody with a submissive spirit. Now a person who is a son, but a disobedient son, places himself in Satan's realm. I've written a book called, "The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority." If you don't have it, you ought to get it. Why? Because it teaches this principle: that you can never be over those things that God wants under you until you're under those things that God has placed over you. Jesus Christ in His humanity submitted to the Father. Now don't get the idea that Jesus overcame because He was inherently God. That is not how He overcame. Jesus did not overcome the devil as God would overcome the devil. Jesus overcame the devil as man filled with the Holy Ghost. He did not pull rank of us. Now if Jesus had come here just as God disguised as a man, what temptation would there have been? The Bible says, "God tempteth no man with evil; neither can he be tempted with evil." There'd have been no temptation. But Jesus is there in His humanity. And Jesus, as a human, fully God—yes, fully God—but also fully man. In His humanity, He laid aside the prerogatives that were His as God. And as man now, dependent upon God, filled with the Holy Spirit, anointed with the Holy Spirit, went out as our example. He didn't pull rank. The way that He, as man, overcame Satan is the way that I, as man, can overcome Satan, depending upon Jesus as Jesus depended upon the Father. And when I am to Jesus what Jesus was to the Father, Jesus will be to me what the Father was to Jesus. It's the principle of sonship. There's the principle of submission. Do you want the will of God? Are you willing to submit to the will of God?

### **C. The Principle of Spirituality**

Well, here's the third principle: the principle of spirituality, to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Go back again, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 22: "And the Holy Ghost descended up, in a bodily shape like a dove upon him..." Look in chapter 4, verse 1: "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost..." Go to chapter 4, verse 14: "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit unto Galilee..." Do you see that? Go down to verse 18: Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach the gospel..." It's very obvious that Jesus is Spirit filled. Jesus is anointed. And, friend, it is foolish and wicked for you to try to overcome Satan's ploys without the dynamism and the dynamic of the Holy Spirit in you. Jesus said, concerning the Holy Spirit, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

### **D. The Principle of Scripture**

Next principle, number four: the principle of Scripture—Scripture. Over and over

again in this encounter Jesus is using Scripture. Look in chapter 4, verse 4: “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Look in chapter 4, verse 8: “And Jesus answered unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” Skip on down to verse 12: “And Jesus, answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.” Here Jesus is ramified, enforced, strengthened by the Word of God. Now, friend, the Scripture is the Spirit’s sword. You cannot have the Spirit without sonship. But once you have the Spirit, you cannot have the Spirit’s power without submission. And once you are submitted, then the Holy Spirit has a sword, and the Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. It is not your sword. You can’t wield it. You cannot use Scripture against Satan if you’re not a son, a daughter, Spirit-filled and submitted. You can’t use the Scripture. But here’s Jesus filled with the Holy Ghost, anointed with power, and Satan comes and gives Him this temptation and that temptation and that temptation and that temptation, and Jesus takes the Word of God and runs him through. “Take that! Take that! Take that!” He doesn’t argue with Satan. You don’t have to argue with Satan. Bring the Word of God against him, and then the argument is no longer between you and Satan, but between Satan and God, and guess who’s going to win the argument. Bring the Word of God. These Scriptures, by the way, come from the Book of Deuteronomy. I believe Jesus must have had His quiet time in the Book of Deuteronomy that morning. I mean, He’s loaded up with the Word of God. What an awesome power is the Word of God! Now remember the Bible is the Spirit’s sword; therefore, you must know the Word, but the Spirit must use the Word. By the way, put down 1 John 2, verse 14: “I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” Who? Strong young men with the Word of God abiding in them have overcome the wicked one.

#### **E. The Principle of Satisfaction**

The last of these principles I want to mention tonight is the principle of satisfaction, the principle of satisfaction. You know, Jesus said, “The devil cometh and he findeth nothing in me.” What that means is, literally, “I don’t have any itch Satan can scratch.” Jesus is already satisfied. Now let me tell you what temptation is. Temptation is the devil’s attempt to get you to satisfy a legitimate hunger in an illegitimate way. Now think with me for a moment. The devil has no raw material. God made everything, didn’t He? And if God made everything, what did He say when He made everything? It’s good. So everything that God made is good. So the only thing the devil can use to tempt you with is something that’s intended for good but has been corrupted. It’s been perverted. The devil is a pervert. Did that sink in? The devil is a pervert. He only perverts that which is

good because he has no raw material. All sin, therefore, is an attempt to satisfy a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way. For example, "...turn stones into bread." That is, satisfy a genuine appetite—thank God for appetite—but do it in an illegitimate way at the wrong time. "The kingdoms of this world..." Is there anything wrong with the kingdoms of this world? No. "The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ." It's not wrong; it's right. What the devil is tempting Jesus to do was to obtain a lawful heritage in an, with an unlawful means. "Cast thyself down into the temple...". Was there anything wrong with wanting people to follow Him? He is the Messiah. No, but the devil is trying to get Him to fulfill a spiritual desire and a spiritual goal with an unspiritual means.

Now let me tell you something about the principle of satisfaction. When you find yourself being tempted, find out what that temptation is a perversion of and satisfy that temptation in a legitimate way, and that removes it. Don't let the devil get you to satisfy a legitimate hunger in an illegitimate way. For example, we said what? "...the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life..." Doing, having, and being. Doing—the devil will come to you and he will say, "Hey, do this, do this, follow me." Let me tell you something, friend. There is no greater thing to do than serve Jesus. You're looking at a man that's very fulfilled. I really am. Now I hope and I pray that I have enough sense to find out that there is no greater thing on earth, nothing greater to do, than to serve Jesus. Well, you say, "Pastor, you need food, you need sleep, you need play." Yes, I do. They're all the more meaningful when they are sublimated and brought under the control of one great desire, and that is to serve Jesus Christ. Listen. When you get your heart, your life, your mind committed to serving Jesus Christ, it's amazing how much power you've taken away from the devil to tempt you in the area of doing. What about in the matter of having? Most of us want material things, and, again, if you have them, I'm happy for you. And, again, the Bible says, "God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants." But you see, the devil may come to you and say, "You need to do this thing or that thing in order to have things," and somehow fail to put Him first. Listen. The Bible teaches that in Christ all things are yours. You want to know how much you have? Add up everything you have that money can't buy and death can't take away. I mean, if you have Jesus, if you have Jesus, if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, if you're the part of the family of God, you are so blessed. God is listening to me right now. He hears what I'm about to say. I would not even have to think about it for one scintilla of an iota of a second would I trade places with Donald Trump. Are you kidding? He's the pauper. We're the rich ones. We have it!

## Conclusion

All things are ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. Doing, serve Him; Having—all things are

ours in the Lord Jesus. Being—have you ever seen a prince and a king? Take a look. I mean, we are a kingdom of priests. The Bible says that Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers. Have you ever thought about that? Now I'm not being arrogant and I'm not being silly. Take a good look at the guy right here. I'm next of kin to the Holy Trinity. I am a brother to Jesus Christ. That's great, isn't it? I mean, we've got it. Doing—serving; Having—all things are yours; Being—you're a child of God, a royal blueblood, twice born. Find your satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ and don't let some pervert call Satan come along with secondary goods and pull you off the track so you don't reach the real thing. Jesus said, "Satan cometh, but he finds nothing in me." Jesus had no itch the devil could scratch because He was already satisfied. Amen? Amen. Glory to God. Bow your heads in prayer. Would you say, "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, keep me from temptation. Help me, Lord Jesus, to understand what I have in You and not to take second best." Now remember the first principle, which is sonship. If you're not a son or a daughter of Jesus, you need to be saved tonight. You'll never really overcome until you're saved because you don't have what it takes. Let me lead you in a prayer tonight if you're not certain that you're saved. And, by the way, you may be a member of Bellevue and not be saved. Lets get it settled right now tonight. Pray this way: Dear God, I'm not certain that I'm saved, or I'm certain I'm not saved, whichever your case may be. But, Lord Jesus, I need to be saved and I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Thank You that You shed Your blood on the cross for me. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus. Now don't just mumble the words. Pray it from the depths of your being. Save me, Lord Jesus. Now don't look for an emotional feeling. It may come, but don't worry about that. That's incidental. You're not saved by emotions. You're saved by His grace when you put your faith in what He did. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then pray this way by faith; Thank You for doing it, Jesus. I receive it according to Your word and that settles it. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And begin now, Jesus, to make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# Temptation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 22, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 4:1–13**

*“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.”*

LUKE 4:1–2

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## Introduction

Take God's Word please and turn to Luke chapter four. Luke chapter four. We're going to read together now the first thirteen verses. And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. And being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing. And when they were ended he afterward hungered.

Now I believe that is factually true. But it almost seems like an understatement. Can you imagine going forty days and then it says, and he hungered? And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him saying, It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God. And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain showed him all

the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee and the glory of it, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve. And he brought him to Jerusalem and set him on a pinnacle of the temple and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence. For it is written, he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee and in their hands shall they bear thee up lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season.

Now one thing is common about all of us and that is we're tempted every day in many ways. The ministry is not immunity. I am tempted. Being a Christian does not exempt you from temptation. But as we're going to find out that we're all tempted, but we need not fail, as a matter of fact, we're tempted only to allow us to overcome, that we might have the joy of overcoming, and that Jesus might therefore be glorified, and that we therefore would be strengthened. I want us to jump right into this study on temptation tonight.

## I. The *Who* of Temptation

The very first thing I want us to notice is who it was that was tempted. We're going to ask some questions. Question number one—who? Look in chapter four, verse one. And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness being forty days tempted. It was Jesus who was tempted.

I want to tell you that right now because many of you who suffer temptation are going to think, I must be tempted because I'm bad. And if I'm tempted, it must be some reason that is identified with my sinfulness and my wretchedness. Oh no, my friend. It is not of sin to be tempted. Jesus was tempted. Write in your margin Hebrews chapter four and verse fifteen. It speaks of the Lord Jesus who is our high priest. And it says we, for we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.

Now theologians have raced their theological motors to ask this question, could Jesus have sinned. And was the temptation real if he could not have sinned? Well, I want to tell you it was impossible for Jesus to sin. I believe that with all of my heart. Well, you say, if it was impossible for Jesus to sin then how could he have been tempted?

Well, let me give you an illustration. And all illustrations fall somewhere or fail somewhere. But I want you to imagine a great railroad bridge, a trestle that's built out

over some crevice somewhere. It's built of steel and concrete and it has been engineered and supported so it can hold monumental weight. And after the engineers have finished building that great bridge, than they take five diesel locomotives and run them out on that railroad trestle. And they rev them up until there's a tremendous vibration to shake that great bridge. And the bridge stands there. It does not crumble; it does not fall. Was the test real? Yes, the test was real. Was the test to show that the bridge could fall? No. The test was to show that the bridge could not fall.

The temptation of Jesus was very real. It was not a temptation to show that he could fall. It was a temptation, real as it was, to show that the Lord Jesus Christ could not fall. But, here's the point, here's the point. If Satan had the audacity to tempt the very Son of God, don't you think he's going to tempt you? I mean if Satan aimed his guns at Jesus, don't you think he's going to aim his guns at you? As a matter of fact. Satan aims his biggest guns at God's servants. Now the proud Christian tempts the devil to tempt him.

## **II. The *When* of Temptation**

So, who was tempted? Jesus Christ. Second thing. When was he tempted? Well, look again in verse one. And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost. Well, what does that refer to? Well, just go back to chapter three and look with me for a moment in verse twenty-two. And the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him. And a voice come from Heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

When was Jesus tempted? The Lord Jesus was tempted after a great, great spiritual experience. The Lord Jesus was baptized. Now why was Jesus baptized? Jesus was not baptized because he had been saved. He never needed to be saved. Jesus was baptized because baptism deals with identification. The secret, the meaning of baptism is identification. When Jesus was baptized, he identified Himself with us. Jesus came and was baptized to prophesy that he would die be buried and raised again the third day. And so when Jesus was baptized, he identified Himself with sinful man, though he Himself was not a sinner. But he came to die for us. When we are baptized, we identify ourselves with sinless Jesus.

And so, in the water of baptism symbolically the sinner and the Savior meet. And so Jesus was being baptized to identify Himself with us. And when Jesus was baptized, as he came up out of the water, and by the way, I wonder why people who don't believe in baptism by immersion, I wonder what they do with these kind of verses. I wonder how they explain this away, that that the Lord Jesus went down into the water the Bible says, and he came up out of the water. It's especially clear in the Gospel of Mark. I don't know how they explain that away.

But when Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit of God, like a dove—not a

dove, but like a dove—that is, very tenderly, very gently, very beautifully, descended on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Jesus did not receive the Holy Spirit at his baptism. If John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, how much more would his Master have been filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. But this speaks of the special anointing that came upon the Lord Jesus Christ for the crisis that he was about to face.

But I want you to learn something friend, that Satan will attack you as he attacked Jesus after your greatest spiritual experiences. You can find a principle all through the Bible that some of the men of God have faced their greatest temptation right after their greatest spiritual victory. And many of them went down because they were not ready for what I want to call the devil after the dove. The dove, the Holy Spirit came. And then Satan came. Think of Elijah in First Kings chapter eighteen. Elijah's up there on Mount Carmel having a great spiritual experience. In chapter nineteen, he's down in the valley running from Jezebel. Satan counterattacked Elijah. Think of Moses. Moses who had come through had come the great victory of the opening of the Red Sea and had a great spiritual experience there. Then out in the wilderness Moses gets so discouraged he prays that he might die. Think of Jonah. Jonah, who preached a citywide revival in the city of Nineveh and the entire city repented in sackcloth and ashes. And then later on Jonah gets so backslidden. He also asked God to kill him.

I have found out in my own experience that sometimes when God is blessing a church or perhaps when I've been up night after night preaching and working in a revival crusade, fasting, praying, and God blesses in tremendous ways, if I'm not careful, I will begin to coast. I'll have some of my worst moments after great spiritual experiences. Sometimes Joyce and I will get in a family discussion or something after, after a great, great spiritual experience. Why is that? I think we tend to think that we can put blessings on ice. I think we tend to think that we can coast. I think we tend to think, now, I have arrived.

Dear friend, you never arrive spiritually. Just like manna. They had to gather that manna every morning. They couldn't eat yesterday's manna. If they tried to hoard it up it would breed worms and stink. Now, dear friend, you have got to keep a fresh testimony with the Lord Jesus.

But now, when was Jesus tempted? Jesus was tempted when he was filled with the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, the more God blesses you, the more the devil is going to counterattack. I don't want to make you afraid. But I want to make you forewarned. I think it was Leonard Ravenhill who said one of the most poignant things I've ever heard. He said, When God opens the windows of Heaven to bless us, the devil will open the doors of Hell to blast us. That's worth thinking about.

### III. The *Where* of Temptation

So who? The Lord Jesus. When? Right after a great spiritual experience. Where was he tempted? Well, let's continue to look right here in Luke chapter four. And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Now, the Lord Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. And he overcame. Adam was tempted in a garden and he fell. That's interesting. The first Adam was tempted in a beautiful garden, in a perfect environment, and he went down. The last Adam was tempted in a wilderness and he stood.

You know what that tells me? It tells me, dear friend, there is no environment where you're safe from Satan and there's no place where you cannot overcome him. That's what it tells us. And when, and the social gospeler needs to learn this. You know, the behavioral psychologist needs to learn this. Because they get the idea that what is wrong with man is his environment. And if we can change the environment, we can change the man. Well, who had who had a pretty good environment? I'd say Adam did, wouldn't you? Have you ever heard of a better environment than that? And it was in the Garden of Eden that Adam fell. Who had a terrible environment? Jesus, in the wilderness fasting, out there, the Bible says with the wild beasts. A direct frontal assault of Satan and Jesus overcame. We need to learn therefore that *the principle of overcoming is not isolation but insulation*. Learning how to have that power of God in our lives.

### IV. The *What* of Temptation

I want to ask a fourth question. Not only who, when, and where, but what. What happened to him? Well, look if you will in verse two. Being forty days tempted of the devil, Jesus had a face-to-face encounter with the devil. Now that leads me to say to you that there is a personal devil. Now, you say, Of course, everybody knows there's a personal devil. No, everybody doesn't know that.

I went to a Baptist college paid for with Baptist money. And I was taught in that Baptist college by a professor of religion there is no personal devil. I was taught that. Now what I was taught was this, that the devil is the personification of evil, that is, evil is personified as if he were a, or if it were a person. And actually what that is just the idea of evil within you, the personification of evil. Well, I want to ask you a question. What evil was there in the Lord Jesus to be personified? Absolutely none. I mean that's a ridiculous theory if you say that evil is the devil is the personification of evil and Jesus was tempted therefore by the personification of that evil that was in him. No, when you read there's the normal natural sense of this, it's very easy to see that Satan is a real person. A real person. You could also prove that in Mark chapter five. There are people who say, well, those people who believe in the Old Testament and demons, that was

just their way of explaining mental illness. And again, that demons were just an imaginary force. Well, you read in Mark chapter five where there was a man so full of the devil that Jesus—his name was Legion—and when Jesus cast the devil out of that man, the Bible says those devils went into a herd of swine. That's one of the occupational hazards of being a preacher. At least I heard it before you did. And those evil spirits went into that herd of swine and the swine went into the sea and the sea went into them and as Doctor Lee said, they committed hogicide.

Well now, my dear friend, listen. Are you going to tell me that was just some psychological manifestation? No. Satan is a very real person. Now, so there was a temptation. And how did the devil tempt Jesus? Learn this. Now we're talking about the what of temptation, This temptation that came through Satan is as old as the Garden of Eden. As a matter of fact, all temptation is the same. That's the reason the Bible says, Let no man say when he is tempted, that his temptation is greater than he can bear. Because the Bible goes on to say, There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. Don't get the idea that you have a very unique temptation. Your temptation is a garden-variety temptation. I don't care what you're facing.

There are only three temptations. Only three. Are you ready? Here they are. First John, chapter two and verse sixteen. I'm going to show you that Jesus faced all three. You see, the Bible says, He was tempted in all points like as we are. Well, does that mean that Jesus was tempted to take drugs? No. Does that mean that Jesus was tempted to drive through a school zone at a hundred miles an hour? No. Does that mean that Jesus was tempted to go to a dirty movie? They didn't have dirty movies. So, what does it mean when it says that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are? It means that all temptation is only of three basic things and Jesus endured all three and overcame all three. Let me give you what they are. First John chapter two and verse sixteen. For all that is in the world. I mean this is it, this is the sum total, the bottom line. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but of the world. Everything that's of God is good and everything that's not of God is evil and sin. And you can put the world in this description. It's very plain—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And that's what the Bible means when it says that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. In all points. He didn't feel every single temptation. But he felt the same kind of temptation and he overcame them.

#### **A. The Lust of the Flesh**

Now, what is this? What is the lust of the flesh? You'll face the lust of the flesh tomorrow. That is the temptations that deal with doing things in your body that you ought not to do. The lust of the flesh is primarily warring against your body. And so, if you're going to describe the lust of the flesh, you would describe the lust of the flesh in

this verb, doing.

Now, what about the lust of the eyes? The lust of the eyes deals with having. Having, ownership. Have you ever, you see your eyes have an appetite. Have you ever heard anyone say feast your eyes upon that? Huh, your eyes, just like your body, have an appetite. And do, the lust of the eyes deals with having, ownership. And while the lust of the flesh, being, deals primarily with the body, the lust of the eyes, having, deals primarily with the soul, the ego.

Now, what about the pride of life? The pride of life deals primarily with the spirit and the key verb is being, being. And all temptation is in those three areas. Either doing, having, or being. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. All temptation is just wrapped up in that. You won't face a temptation tomorrow that is not a temptation to your body, the lust of the flesh, a temptation to your soul, the lust of the eyes, or a temptation to your spirit, which is the pride of life. You are body, soul, and spirit. And temptation comes that way. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world.

Now, the lust of the flesh deals with our passions. The lust of the eyes deals with our possessions. And the pride of life deals with our pride. All temptation is in passion, possession, and pride. In those areas. First, it comes in doing, having, and being. Body, soul, and spirit. That's what Eve faced in the Garden of Eden when she went down. That's what Jesus faced in the wilderness when he stood. And that's what you're going to face tomorrow in the school, the office, the home, the ball field, wherever you are. You're going to face one of these temptations or all of these temptations or some of these temptations when you are tempted.

Now, let's see how the Lord Jesus was faced with the lust of the flesh, for example. Look if you will in verses three and four. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command that this stone, command this stone that it be made bread. That is, satisfy your body. Eat some bread. And Jesus answered saying, It is written that man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word of God. Now here was a temptation to his flesh. Now, it was a temptation in the realm of doing. What Satan said to Jesus was, Satisfy your body. Make a god of your appetite. Pamper your flesh. Now let's make it abundantly clear that there's nothing wrong with eating. I intend to do some after this service tonight. There's nothing wrong with eating. There is nothing wrong with having bread. For did not Jesus teach us to pray, Give us this day our daily bread? Jesus Christ broke bread and fed the multitudes. Jesus Christ fed his disciples bread and fish. But Jesus was led of the Spirit to fast. And the devil said, Put your fleshly desires above the will of God. Now friend, that's what sin is. Sin is not merely doing something bad in and of itself. Eating bread is not bad. But sin is doing something good in the wrong place. That may be sin. The Bible says in Matthew chapter six, verse thirty-three, Seek

ye first the Kingdom of God. Now had Jesus put bread first and God second, then Jesus would have sinned. You see, tomorrow you will face this temptation to put your meals first, to put your rest first, to put television first, to put friends first, to put fun first, to put business first, see? They all may be fine. But not first. Not first. Tomorrow you will be tempted to let some habit or some activity take the place that God ought to take. And for most of us, it'll be before we leave the house and have our quiet time. Our breakfast will take the place of our quiet time. Or the newspaper will take the place of our quiet time. Or that extra sleep will take the place of our quiet time. Hmm? Being, pampering the flesh, your desires. Nothing wrong with the newspaper, nothing wrong with the breakfast, nothing wrong with the rest. But, if it takes the place of what you ought to be doing for Jesus, it'd be wrong, wouldn't it? See? That, my dear friend, is the lust of the flesh.

### **B. The Lust of the Eyes**

And then not only did Satan tempt Jesus with the lust of the flesh. But he also tempted Jesus with the lust of the eyes. Look if you will now beginning in verse five. And the devil taking him up into a high mountain showed unto him all of the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee and the glory of them. For that is delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. See, this deals with possession. Now, no matter how rich a man is, he can only sleep on one bed at a time, only wear one suit of clothes at a time, only eat one meal at a time. But there are many people who want more things, not because they need more things, but just because they want more things. There are businessmen who are just simply keeping score. I mean they don't, they couldn't possibly spend all that they have. But it is just a desire. An inordinate desire to make more. It is simply to have. It is called the lust of the eyes. Possessions. Again I want to say, there's nothing wrong with possessions. Except if you get them in an illegitimate way or if they take your eyes from the Lord Jesus Christ. By the way, you want to know what real possessions are? I've told before. You add up everything you own that money can't buy and death can't take away. And you'll find out how rich or how poor you may be.

### **C. The Pride of Life**

All right now, let's look at the third area was tempted. Not only in the in the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, but in the pride of life. Not only in the area of passions and possessions, but in the area of pride. Notice now in verse nine. And he brought him to Jerusalem and set him on a pinnacle of the temple and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from thence, from hence. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest

at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Now what was this temptation? This temptation was to do something spectacular. You know the book of Malachi had prophesied the coming Messiah. And the book of Malachi said it this way. The Lord whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple. Now you, wouldn't that be a spectacular entry? I mean for the Lord Jesus Christ just to come wafting down out of Heaven. Just to jump off the pinnacle of the temple and with an angel escort to come daintily down to the temple pavement. And everybody would say, Did you see that? Why the Lord has come to this temple. That is, do something to get attention. To draw attention to yourself. This is in the area of being. Be somebody important. Be a person of distinction. Drive the car that will make your neighbors envious. Ha, that's the way they sell these things. You see, the problem is not wanting to be rich; it's wanting to be richer than somebody else. And so, this is the area simply of being, and being somebody. All right, now, the Lord Jesus was tempted in the area of passion, possession, and pride. In the area of doing, having, and being. And so will you be tempted in all of those same areas tomorrow. Now that is the what. It was a real temptation from a real devil.

## **V. The *Wherefore* of Temptation**

Okay? Now, let's get right down to the nitty part of the gritty and let me talk to you about the wherefore. Since we've gone through all of this to set the stage, let me show you how the very Son of God who is our example overcame. And I'm going to give you some principles that if you will put these principles not only in your notebook, but in your head, and not only in your head, but in your heart, I'll promise you victory. Well, you're saying what good does it do if you promise? All right, God will promise you victory right out of his Word. All right? Let me give you.

### **A. The Principle of Sonship**

Number one. Make certain that you're saved. This is what I want to call the principle of Sonship. God back if you will to Luke chapter three now and look in verse twenty-two. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape and descended in a bodily shaped like a dove upon him. And a voice came from Heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son. Now, why did the Lord Jesus and how did the Lord Jesus overcome? Well he overcame because he was the Son of God. I want to say the only way you will overcome is to be a Son of God. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a son of man that you, a son of man might become a Son of God, okay? We have become his brethren when we get saved and, as I have told you, when you get saved, you become next of kin to the Holy Trinity. For Jesus is not ashamed to call you his brother or his sister. There can be no victory over Satan without the new birth. Now if you're trying

to overcome temptation without being saved, folks, you've gotten it wrong. You need to get saved first. There's no victory without salvation. I heard about a man who got saved one time and he went back to work and his employer began to ridicule him. And he said, Will, I hear that you've gotten victory over the devil. He said, no sir, I have the victor over the devil. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And you have the victor, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, number one. Make certain that you have been born again. Do you know that you're saved? Don't try to go out and live victorious tomorrow without that assurance of your salvation.

### **B. The Principle of Submission**

Second principle. As a Christian, surrender every area of your life to Jesus before the temptation comes. All right, now look again at verse twenty-two. Chapter three and verse twenty-two. The Bible says the voice came from Heaven and said, Thou art my beloved Son. In thee I am well pleased. In thee I am well pleased. This is not only the principle of Sonship, but it's the principle of submission. God the Father was well pleased with God the Son. Now why was God the Father well pleased with God the Son? Because God the Son said I do always those things that please him. That is, my life is lived in submission to the Father. Now the way to overcome temptation tomorrow is to submit to Jesus tonight. Not only to get saved; but to be absolutely, totally committed. Is there any area of your life that: is not committed to Jesus Christ? Is there some area in your life that is not committed to Jesus Christ? It is in that area that Satan is going to tempt you. And the Bible warns us in Ephesians chapter four not to give a place to the devil. That unconfessed, uncommitted place, that unsubmitted area in your life is going to become the devil's beachhead, the devil's foxhole, the devil's campground. There's the principle of submission. Victory is not for rebels. All right. Number three. First of all, make certain that you're saved. Number two, check your life and make certain that there's no area unsundered. If there's an area of unsunder in your life, dear friend, you don't need to get victory. I mean, you have already, you don't need to get ready for victory, you've already failed. What you need to do is get cleaned up. I'm telling you right now, right now, make certain there's no area unsubmitted to the lord, not any.

### **C. The Principle of Spiritual Fullness**

Number three, there is the principle of spiritual fullness. It's not merely enough to be saved. It's not merely enough to be clean. But Oh my friend, you must, if you would have power tomorrow morning or the rest of this evening, you must have that anointing of the Holy Spirit of God. Now go back to chapter three, verse twenty-two. Again the Bible says, the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him. Look in chapter four verse one. And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost. Look if you will in

chapter four and verse fourteen. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. Look again in chapter four and verse eighteen. Jesus said, the spirit of the Lord is upon me. Do you see that? Now here's something I want you to learn, and I want you to learn it clearly and plainly. Jesus Christ was very God of very God. But when Jesus came to this earth, he emptied Himself of the prerogatives that were his as God and became a man as much as you're a man. And therefore as man, he depended upon the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus never performed a miracle in the power that was inherently his. But Jesus only performed his miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit. Why? Why? So he could be my example. You see, Jesus cannot be my example if he pulls rank on me. Do you understand what I'm saying? I mean if Jesus goes around acting as God and overcomes the devil, what help is that to me? I'll say, well, big deal, he's God. Big deal. How does that help me? It only gives me an inferiority complex. But Jesus did not overcome Satan as God. Jesus overcame Satan as man filled with the Holy Ghost. That's very important you understand that. That's the reason that Jesus became a man. And he became an example for us that we can understand that, my dear friend, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the same power that anointed Jesus is available to you. As our friend Stephen Olford said, You should be consciously, continually, conspicuously filled with the Spirit of God. Now are you spirit-filled? Are you? You'll not overcome the devil as Jesus did unless you are.

#### **D. The Principle of Scriptural Knowledge**

The principle of Sonship. The principle of submission, in whom I am well-pleased. The principle of Spiritfulness. Ah, but wait a minute. We're not quite there yet. When Jesus was filled with the Spirit and when Jesus came against Satan, there's another principle. It is the principle of scriptural knowledge, of scriptural knowledge. How did the Holy Spirit through Christ overcome the devil? Well over and over again Jesus met Satan with the authority of the Word of God. Look in chapter four and verse four. And Jesus answered him, that is the devil, saying, It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God. Look if you will please in verse eight. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me Satan. For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve. Look in verse eighteen. Again, excuse me. Look in verse twelve if you will please. Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, that means it is said in the Word of God, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Now let me tell you something friend. When Satan gets on your case, do not argue with him. He's not worth it. Know the Word of God. Point Satan to the Word of God. And his argument is no longer with you. It's with God. You step out of the argument and see who wins. See who wins. Jesus quoted Scripture. It is written. Now the Bible says that this book is a sword. Three times there in the wilderness Jesus ran Satan through with the sword. Now, my friend, what Jesus did was not just take the Bible and wave it in

front of the devil. There are so many people who have the idea that the Bible is there on the coffee table to protect your home. You can have a Bible on the coffee table and your home can be split by divorce. Don't get the idea that the Bible is some sort of a talisman to protect you from evil. Like in a B grade movie when the vampire's coming. Back! Back! That isn't the way Jesus used the Bible. Jesus had a word from the Word. That is, Jesus took the Scripture, what the Bible calls a *rhema* from the *logos*, and used the Word of God. It's very obvious that the Word of God was stored up in the heart and mind of Jesus. For everything that Satan said Jesus had an answer from the Word of God. Would you be an overcomer? You better know the Word. You'd better know the Word. Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word. The Bible says in the book of the Revelation concerning Satan, And they overcame him by the Word of their testimony.

#### **E. The Principle of Satisfaction**

Principle number five. Not only the principle of the Scriptures, that is, be saturated with the Word of God. But next, the principle, dear friend, of satisfaction. Find your satisfaction in the Lord. Do you know what a temptation is? A temptation is an attempt to satisfy a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way. You see all of your basic desires are God-given. They are basic God-given drives. And all the devil can do is take what God has created and pervert it.

You see, the devil is the original pervert. Did you know that? He's a pervert. That's exactly what he is. The Bible says he's perverted in all of his ways. And so, what he does is to take legitimate desires. And every one of these temptations of Jesus, in a sense, were a legitimate desire that the devil had taken and twisted. You see, there's nothing really wrong with doing and having and being. As long as you do the right thing, have the right thing, and you are the right thing.

Now, when you find the right thing to do and do it, when you find the right things to have and have them, when you find the right thing to be and be it, then the temptation's gone. You see, Jesus said, the devil comes and he hath nothing in me. What does that mean? It means that Jesus had no itch the devil could scratch. You see. There was, Jesus had already found his wellsprings in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing wrong with bread. Jesus taught us to pray for it. Nothing wrong with kingdoms. For Jesus said, the kingdoms of this world, the Bible says, shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. And Jesus taught us to pray, Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done. Nothing wrong with our Lord Jesus receiving glory and power, but not the devil's way.

Now let me tell you something folks. What you need to do is to find your satisfaction in the Lord. You talk about thrills. The thrill of the matter of doing. There's no greater thrill than serving Jesus. And I'm going to tell you, the longer I know him and serve him,

the more that becomes true in my life. The more I understand that the greatest thrill is to know the Lord.

You say, you say, but wait a minute Adrian, we have to eat. Yes, that's true. But food becomes all the better when you're serving Jesus. You say we have to sleep. Yes, that's true. But sleep is all the sweeter when you're serving Jesus. You say, but we need recreation. And you do need recreation. Take some. But recreation becomes all the more meaningful when you're serving the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, the joy of the Lord, it maketh full and bringeth no sorrow with it. There's no kick back. There's no aftertaste. When you serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Doing. Serve the Lord. Having. Listen, folks. Jesus said, all things are yours. That's pretty good, isn't it? The Bible says, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. When you understand that, what's the devil going to do with you? The devil says to you, listen, if you'll serve me, I'll give you everything. You say, you can't give me everything. I already own it. All things are mine. Well, he says, if you don't serve me, I'll take away what you've got. You say, you can't take it away, I don't have anything. It all belongs to God. What's the devil going to do with a man like that? Friend, let me tell you something, friend, the answer to facing temptation is to do what the Lord Jesus did and to find your wellsprings in God.

Doing, having, and being. The pride of life. You talk about being somebody. Hey, folks, let's just remember who we are. We're royal bluebloods. As I said a few moments ago, next of kin to the Holy Trinity. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Now get this down in your heart. Let it be real to you. Make certain that you know that you're saved. Make certain that there's no area of your life that's unsundered, so God can say, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Then, my dear friend, surrender your life to the Holy Spirit of God and say, Spirit of God, as you fill my Savior, fill me. And then, my friend, every morning load up on the Word of God. Let this Bible be your sword to protect you from the onslaughts of Satan. And then, as you do that, dear friend, learn to find your satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **F. The Principle of Supplication**

And then one last word. And it's the principle of supplication. All of this is wrapped around with prayer. God back to Luke chapter three. I want to show you something we often miss. Luke chapter three and again in verse twenty-one. And look at it. Now when all the people were baptized it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized—now watch it—and prayed. Is that underscored in your Bible? And praying. If you read it fast you might just walk right past that. And praying, the Heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shaped. It was his supplication. It was his prayer. It was his prayer life that enable him to overcome. As Jesus said, Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.

## Conclusion

Now if you'll take these six principles and apply them, you will be victorious as your Savior was victorious. Who was tempted? Jesus. When was he tempted? After a great spiritual experience. Where was he tempted? In a wilderness. What was the temptation? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. How did he overcome the temptation? Those six principles. And he did it for you to be your example. Let's pray. Would you pray right now, Lord Jesus, make me a victorious Christian. Teach me Lord Jesus how to walk before you and to be pure tomorrow. Would you do that? If there's any area of your life that's not surrendered to him, would you make that surrender. And would you ask God the Holy Spirit to point out any are---- in the realm of being, or having, or doing that is not surrendered to him? Spirit of God, etch the truth upon our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# How to Handle Temptation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 12, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 4:1–18; 3:21–22**

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you open your Bibles tonight please for our Bible study to Luke chapter four. I want to speak to you tonight about how to handle temptation. Anybody here ever get tempted? Let me see your hand. Well, never mind. I know. Listen, folks, we are all tempted. Now, that temptation is common to man. We are going to see that. And what I am going to be talking with you about tonight is how to handle temptation.

The passage that we have before us tonight speaks of the nature of temptation and it also speaks of the means of victory. Now, we need to study it really for three reasons. Number one, there's an enemy who would harm us. Satan is very real. When I was at college, I went to a liberal college, it called itself a Baptist college, but the religion department was liberal. And I was told there in that religion department, there is no real personal devil, that the devil is only the personification of evil. That is, this was in peoples mind. They conceived of evil like evil was a person. But they did not believe, at least the professor that I had, did not believe in a real personal devil. Well, you're going

to find here the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you're going to find out here where Satan came, and it cost the Lord Jesus Christ. And may I tell you that there was no evil in Jesus to personify.

What I'm trying to say is, that we need to take the Bible at face value. And you need to study this passage of Scripture, number one, because there is a devil to harm us. Number two, our experience to humble us. I mean, dear folks, that most of us have failed if we would be honest. We have failed and do fail. And so every one of us, it behooves every one of us to say, Lord God, open my heart, help me tonight. Teach me, if I can learn to be an overcomer rather than be overcome; if I can learn to be a victor rather than a victim.

But not only is there an enemy to harm us, and there are not only is there an experience to humble us. But my dear friend, there is an example to help us. We have here the story of the Lord Jesus. And how Jesus met Satan in the wilderness, and how He overcame him. And my dear friend, He is both the power and the example to help this man, Adrian Rogers, to help you to live tomorrow, and the rest of this evening, absolutely victorious. It is God's plan that we always be victorious over the world, the flesh, and the devil. I begin reading in verse one. "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan. And was led by the spirit into the wilderness being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing, and when they were ended, He afterward hungered." Now, I'm going to stop there and I'm going to read the rest of the passage as we go along. And we'll take it bit by bit.

But I tonight, so you'll know where I'm going, I want to give you four warnings and six principles. And if you get those, you'll have the message. I don't know how the outline will be, well I do know how it will be because I outlined it. But anyway, I want to give you these four warnings. And then I want to give you six principles. And I pray God that you'll heed the warnings.

## **I. Four Warnings About Temptation**

### **A. There Is No Person Exempt**

Now, here's warning number one concerning temptation. There is no person exempt. There is no person exempt. Look if you will in verse one. "And Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost", and verse two, "being tempted." Being tempted. Jesus was tempted. Now my dear friend, if the very Son of God was not exempt, you're not exempt. Was Jesus Christ tempted? Hebrews chapter four and verse fifteen says, "He was tempted, tested in all points like as we."

Now, when I was going home today after the eleven o'clock service, I tuned to the

radio station and I listened to J. Vernon McGee preach. And he happened to be preaching about the temptation of the Lord Jesus. And he said, and I agree with him one hundred percent. Jesus was not tempted to show that He could sin; He was tempted to show that He could not sin. The temptation was very real and the devil let go with all the artillery of hell. But it is impossible for Him, being God in human flesh to sin. Oh yes, He felt all the assaults of hell. Yes, He felt all that the devil put against Him. He was tested in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

But my dear friend, I want to tell you that if the devil had the audacity to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ, then there's not a Christian, there's not a mother's child in this room, including this Pastor Adrian Rogers who is immune. As a matter of fact, if you are in the Lord's work, you probably subject to temptation because the devil aims his biggest guns at God's servants. If he tempted Jesus, he'll tempt you. And the Bible says in First Corinthians chapter ten and verse thirteen, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." And people who are common ordinary people, no matter who they are or where they are, they are tempted. And if you don't think you're going to be tempted, my dear friend, you are a sitting duck for the devil. So, warning number one. There is no person exempt. So you ought to pay attention.

#### **B. There Is No Period Exempt**

Warning number two: There is no period exempt. Notice what it says here. "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan. And was led by the spirit into the wilderness being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing. And when they were ended, He afterward hungered." What period of time was this? Well Jesus had just been baptized. Jesus had just begun His public ministry. The Holy Spirit of God had descended upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Go back to chapter three and look if you will in verse twenty-one. "Now when all the people were baptized it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him. And a voice came from heaven, which said, thou art my beloved son. In thee I am well pleased." What an incredible experience. And here's the Lord Jesus Christ in the afterglow of that great experience, being anointed with the Holy Ghost.

Now, put it down dear friend. There is no kind of a spiritual experience that you're going to enter into that's going to make you immune to temptation either. The Lord Jesus Christ had had the approval of heaven and it was then that He knew the assault of hell. Leonard Ravenhill, that I read after, and a very fine man. Said that when God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil will open the doors of hell to blast us. And I believe that you are going to find out that there's almost a principle that you

might say, you might call the devil after the dove. In chapter three, the dove descended. In chapter four the devil ascended and came to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ.

Friend, you can get into an argument going home from church. Now, don't speak too loud, or you'll tell on yourself. You can be sitting in church, and have blasphemous thoughts. You can have a great spiritual blessing and you begin to coast. And whenever you have a spiritual victory, the devil will counterattack.

### **C. There Is No Place That Is Exempt**

What I'm trying to say is, there is no person exempt. There is no period that is exempt and there is no place that is exempt. Continue to read. The Bible says He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. That is, He was exactly, precisely in the will of God. He was right where He was supposed to be. He was led by the Spirit, there in the wilderness. And so, don't get the idea that if you are in the will of God, or if your serving God, you're not going to be tempted. This destroys the idea of the behavior psychologists and the social-gospelers who think that somehow we can change men by changing the environment. The first Adam was in the Garden of Eden. And that's where he fell when he was tempted. And the last Adam was tempted in the wilderness. But whether it be in Eden, whether it be in the wilderness, dear friend, your going to find out that there is no person that is exempt. Your going to find out there's no period that is exempt. Your going to find out there's no place that is exempt or immune from your being tempted. You can be tempted in this very service; you can be tempted listening to a sermon.

### **D. There Is No Point Where You Are Exempt**

And I said I would give you four warnings; here's the fourth one. There is no point where you are exempt. Now continue to read in verse three. "And the devil said unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him saying it is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the devil taking Him up into a high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give unto thee and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve. And he brought Him to Jerusalem and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple and said unto Him. If thou be the son of God, cast thyself down from hence. For it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee. And in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at anytime thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, it is

said thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season." Notice it says all the temptation. There is no point Scripture that I've already read to you. In Hebrews chapter four and verse fifteen, Jesus was tempted in all points, like as we are. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are.

Now here the devil had the audacity not only to tempt the Son of God, the audacity to tempt the Son of God after He had been anointed with the Holy Spirit of God, the audacity to tempt the Son of God when He was being led of the Spirit when He was in the right place. But he had the audacity to tempt the Son of God in every area of His life.

He was tempted in all points like as we are. And these three temptations were these. First of all, the Lord Jesus was tempted as we are going to see to turn stone into bread. Look if you will in verse three. "And" "the devil said unto Him. If thou be the Son of God, command the stone be made into bread."

Now, when I say that Jesus Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, that does not mean that Jesus Christ had every temptation, every kind of temptation. For example Jesus was not tempted to smoke cigars. Jesus was not tempted to us crack cocaine. Jesus was not tempted to run a red light. Obvious, He was not tempted to do those things. So, when He was tempted in every point, that doesn't meant that He had all kinds of temptations. The incidentals may vary, but the temptation is the same from age to age, from the Garden of Eden to Memphis, Tennessee, January nineteen ninety two.

Now, the Bible describes these temptations in 1 John chapter two and verse sixteen. This is what it says. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And in that cogent verse, the Apostle John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, summed up all temptation that I will face, you will face, that Jesus Christ faced, that Adam faced in the Garden of Eden, that Jesus faced in the wilderness, and that you face right here.

### **1. The Lust of the Flesh**

Now, what are those three temptations? The lust of the flesh...that is, to satisfy the physical desires of your body. Illegitimate desire, but to satisfy them outside the will of God—called the lust of the flesh and that deals with doing. What you do. And then there's the lust of the eyes. Now, your eyes have an appetite. Have you ever heard anybody say, feast your eyes upon that? The lust of the flesh deals with the body, and that's in the area of doing. The lust of the eyes deals with the soul—that's in the area of having. And then the pride of life deals with the spirit, and that's in the area of being. All temptations are either of doing, having, or being. All temptations either come against the body, the soul, or the spirit.

Now you are going to find out that the devil had the audacity to tempt the Lord Jesus

Christ, first of all, with the lust of the flesh. Secondly, to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ with the lust of the eyes. And thirdly, to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ with the pride of life. That's what these three temptations were.

Now the first temptation here is the lust of the flesh, verses three and four. "And the devil said unto Him, if thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him saying, It is written that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God." Now what was the devil saying to Jesus? Satisfy your body. Make a god of your appetite, and turn these stones into bread. Now, it's very obvious that there is nothing wrong with eating bread. Jesus ate bread, He broke bread with His disciples, Jesus fed five thousand bread. There is nothing wrong with eating bread. But the problem here was that Jesus was being led of the Spirit into the wilderness to fast. And had He turned stones into bread, number one He would have gone contrary to the will of God at this particular time. He would have put bread before God, and the Bible says we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." And Jesus Christ knew that.

Secondly, had Jesus Christ turned stone into bread, it would have been a denial of His incarnation, it would be a denial of His humanity. When I am hungry, I cannot turn stones into bread to satisfy myself, and therefore, Jesus Christ being my example, refused to do it.

And so, first of all, the devil comes along and tempts Jesus in the area of the flesh. Satisfy your cravings; satisfy your physical desires. Now, do we face those same kinds of temptations? Of course you do. The devil will tell you to put your meals, your rest, your television, your friends, your fun, anything else, ahead of God—to satisfy the cravings of your physical body with food, sleep, sex, liquor, games, it doesn't matter. Just put that ahead of God and you have failed in this area of temptation.

## **2. Lust of the Eyes**

Now, what was the second temptation? Not only the lust of the flesh, but the lust of the eyes. Look if you will in verses five through eight. "And the devil taking Him up into a high mountain, showed unto Him, all of the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." Notice He saw them. This is the lust of the eyes. "And the devil said unto Him, all this power will I give thee and the glory of them for that is delivered unto me, to whomsoever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, get thee behind me Satan for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." Now, the devil says to Jesus, if you'll just follow me, if you'll just worship me, if you'll just do my bidding, you can have all of the kingdoms of this world. Just sell out and I'll give you the things of the world. That's the lust of the eyes.

I'm not going to expound on that, I could talk for thirty or forty minutes on the lust of the eyes, but I just want to telescope that and move right on down to the third temptation which is the pride of life. Now look if you will in verses nine and following. "And he brought Him to Jerusalem and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple and said unto Him, if thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from here for it is written He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee and in their hands they shall bear thee up lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, it is said thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

### **3. The Pride of Life**

Now, first of all, the devil comes to Jesus with the lust of the flesh—turn stones to bread. That is, satisfy the physical cravings of your body. Then Satan showed Him all of these things, the wealth, the things that He could feast His eyes upon, the lust of His eyes, the kingdoms of this world. And then he said to Him, satisfy your soul. The ego part of you. And the desire not only to do something, but to have something. And then finally, he came to Him with this third temptation which deals with the pride of life, and the very essence, this is a temptation to His spirit, and that is to be something. What he said to Him was this: I'll take you up here to the pinnacle of the temple. The people are waiting for the Messiah. And the book of Malachi says the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to His temple. You just step off this pinnacle of the temple, and let the angels escort you down. And what a dramatic entrance you'll make. Everybody will be amazed. They will fall down and worship you; they will adore you because of the way that you have come. You will be a very important person.

So, there it is. These are the three temptations that the devil placed in the Lord Jesus. The point I'm making is this. That my dear friend, there is no point where the devil will not tempt you. The devil will tempt you at the lust of the flesh, the devil will tempt you at the lust of the eyes, and the devil will tempt you at the pride of life. This is the way he tempted Eve, in the Garden of Eden, it is the way that he will tempt you. Now, having said that, and giving you these warnings, there is no person, no period, no place, or no point, where you will not be tempted. If you've got that.

## **II. Six Principles for Victory over Temptation**

Now, I want to give you six principles. And I've given you these six principles before, and I'm going to be very brief. But I want you to get them in your heart and in your mind. If you've never heard them, you'll hear them now. If you have heard them, this to review, and to get them down in your heart and in your mind very clearly and very plainly. Because if you will do these six things, you will know victory every place and at every point during every period. You will know the victory that the Lord Jesus, who is both

your example and your power in temptation.

### **A. The Principle of Sonship**

Now the principle number one is the principle of sonship. Look in chapter three and verse twenty-two. Look at it if you will. "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him", that is, upon Jesus, "And a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved son. In thee, I am well pleased." You will never overcome Satan until you become a son of God. Now, Jesus was the Son of God. But Jesus who was the Son of God became the Son of Man that you, a son of man, might become a Son of God. Jesus came to earth that you might come to heaven. Jesus was born of a virgin that you might be born again. There is no way possible that you are going to have victory over Satan without being saved. Everybody here tonight is a Son of God or a slave of Satan. And so there could be no victory without the new birth.

Harold Harris asked this question tonight—Do you know beyond a shadow of any doubt if you would die tonight that you would go to heaven? Have you been saved? If not, the rest of what I have to say does not apply to you. You're going to have to go to go and start right there and receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

### **B. The Principle of Submission**

Second principle. Not only the principle of sonship, but the principle of submission. In this same verse, the Father said this is my son and then He said I am well pleased with Him. Now you can be His son, and not be pleasing to the Father. But if you are pleasing to the Father, then the Father's going to pour His life and His victory into you. A disobedient son is unpleasing to His Father. Jesus said, "I do always those things that please Him."

Now, the best defense is a good offense. Don't wait until temptation comes to try to get out of it. Early in the morning, every morning, and all through the day be seeking to please and obey God your Father. So that He can look at you and say that's my son, that is my daughter, there's my son Adrian, and he is well pleasing to me. And then God will begin to pour His life into me when I obey Him. God does not give spiritual power to rebels.

Are you pleasing? Have you submitted yourself to the Lord? Now, if you've not submitted yourself to the Lord, it's obvious that your not gonna have victory over Satan. Your not gonna have victory over Satan if your walking in a carnal way. You see, a person who is disobedient, puts himself over into the realm of witchcraft. Saul disobeyed the Lord and the Bible says to obey is better than to sacrifice and then the Bible says that disobedience is like the sin of witchcraft. You're already in Satan's realm when you're not an obedient son.

Salvation, submission. Are you are you with me? Are you saved? Are you submitted? Now folks, honestly. Is the great desire of your heart to do the will of God? Jesus said I delight to do thy will. My food, my meat, is to do the will of Him that sent me. You say, I don't know whether I am or not. Well you better find out. Because if you're not, you are a sitting duck for the devil. You will be tempted and you will fall.

### **C. The Principle of Spiritual Power**

Principle number three: Not only the principle of sonship, and the principle of submission, but here is the principle of spiritual power. Look again in chapter three and verse twenty-two. "And the Holy Ghost, descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him" and my dear friend, look if you will in chapter four and verse one. "And Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost." Look if you will in chapter four and verse fourteen. "And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee." Look if you will in chapter four and verse eighteen. "Jesus said, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel."

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth, did not pull rank. He was as much God as if He were not man at all. He was God, very God. But He took upon Him human flesh. And when He took upon Him human flesh, He laid aside the prerogatives that were His as God. And Jesus met Satan and overcame Satan not as God. Jesus met Satan and Jesus overcame Satan as man filled with the Holy Spirit. If you don't hear anything else I say tonight, I want you to hear that. I mean as God, Jesus could have spoken and obliterated Satan. Jesus could vaporize Satan. But Jesus did not do that. Why? Had Jesus done that, He could not be my example anymore than having turned stones into bread could He be my example. Jesus is saying Adrian, I am going to show you exactly how you can overcome Satan. When you are to me what I am to my Father. My Father and I will be to you what He is to me. And I will give you the Holy Spirit. And you will know the anointing. You will be led of the Spirit. You will have the power of the Holy Spirit that is upon you.

Now my dear friend, I don't want to be braggadocios tonight, but I am telling you that all of the power that was available to Jesus Christ there that day is available to Adrian Rogers, and is available to you. And there is a principle that you must, you must, you absolutely must be Spirit-filled. To be Spirit-filled is not a suggestion, not a request—it is a command, Ephesians chapter five and verse eighteen. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be ye being filled with the Holy Ghost." Jesus full of the Holy Ghost overcame Satan. You're no match for Satan, but dear friend, the Holy Spirit of God who is resident in you is. And unless there is that principle of sonship, there can never be that principle of submission. And unless there's that principle of submission,

there can never be that principle of Spirit-fullness, because God does not give His Holy Spirit in full power to rebels. There must be that principle of spiritual power.

Question, are you saved? Question, are you submitted? Question, are you Spirit-filled? Are you consciously filled with the Holy Spirit of God? It is foolish and wicked to try to overcome Satan in the strength of your flesh.

#### **D. The Principle of Scripture**

Fourth principle: the principle of Scripture—the principle of Scripture. Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, used the Bible when Satan came against Him. Look in Luke chapter four and verse four. "Jesus answered him saying, it is written." Look in chapter four and verse twelve. "And Jesus answering said unto Him, it is said." And now He's quoting the Word of God. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Three times Satan came against Jesus Christ with three temptations—a temptation which was the lust of the flesh, a temptation which was the lust of the eyes, a temptation which is the pride of life. Three times the devil came against Jesus. He came against Jesus body, He came against Jesus soul, He came against Jesus' spirit. He came against Jesus in the idea of doing in the idea of having, and in the idea of being. Three times the devil came and three times Jesus took the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, and Jesus ran him through with the Word of God.

Do you know this book? Jesus knew the book. My dear friend, Jesus did not hold up a leather-bound, Scofield reference edition, in front of Satan. He didn't do that. Jesus took a word from the Word. Don't get superstitious about the Bible. Don't think that you can just hold the Bible up and stop Satan. He'll laugh at you. He'll laugh at you. We get the idea from some B-grade movie when a vampire's coming and say, back, back. Oh no. No. Listen. You go into the Word of God and get a word from the Word. The Bible says take the sword of the Spirit and when the Bible says the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God it doesn't use the word logos. It uses the word rhema, which is a word out of the Word. What Jesus did was to take a rhema from the logos. He took a word from the Word—a word that was fitting, a word that was profitable.

Jesus was saturated with the Word of God and He knew exactly how to use it against Satan. Do you? Do you? Are you a student of this book? Are you a lover of God's Word? No wonder your like play dough in the hands of Satan. There is the principle of sonship, "This is my beloved son." There is the principle of submission—"In whom I am well pleased." There's the principle of spiritual power—"And the Holy Ghost descended upon Him, Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit." There's the principle of the Scripture—"Jesus took the Word of God and Jesus came against Satan."

## E. The Principle of Satisfaction

Fifth principle. There is the principle of satisfaction. The devil tried to get under the skin of Jesus. The devil tried to find some itch that Jesus had that he could scratch. But Jesus said, the devil comes and he finds nothing in Me. He hath nothing in me. I think that means I don't have any itch he can scratch. I don't have any need that he can satisfy. You see, what the devil wants to do is to try to get you to satisfy a legitimate need, in an illegitimate way. All sin is trying to satisfy a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way.

Now I've told you before the devil is a pervert. And I use that word after having carefully thought about it. He is a pervert. The devil has no raw material. The devil didn't make anything, God made everything. So all the devil can do is take what God has made and pervert it. All the devil can do is take a God-given desire and twist it and pervert it. I mean, you think about it. Hunger is a God-given desire. But drunkenness and gluttony is a sin. And may I say that's probably the Baptist sin. Gluttony...drunkenness, I hope not. Gluttony ought not to be.

The devil just takes a good thing and he perverts it. The sex drive—is sex dirty, filthy? Of course not. When God created sex, made man and women, God said that is very good. And the Bible says that marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled. And when God says thou shalt not commit adultery and when God says flee fornication, God is not trying to keep you from sex. God is trying to keep sex for you. It's God's wonderful, gracious gift. But, the devil, the devil will take that gift and pervert it and twist it. And the Bible clearly forbids all sexual activity before marriage. And the Bible clearly forbids all homosexual activity—clearly and plainly. And the Bible clearly forbids you having a sexual relationship with anyone who is not your married partner period. Period. No ifs, ands, and buts about it. Sex is one of God's most beautiful, gracious gifts. But the devil wants to take it and twist it. And pervert it.

God wants you—you have a natural desire for security, a natural desire for excitement and success. All of these things are good and natural. But what the devil wants to do is to take those natural desires and twist them.

Now let me tell you dear friend, let's go back again to the three areas of temptation. Doing, having, and being. What is the greatest thing you could do? I mean of all the things you could possibly do, what is the greatest thing you could do? Serve God. I mean it. To serve God. There is no greater thrill, than to be right with God. Serve God.

What is the greatest thing that you could have? Peace with God. Well you say, I want more than that. Well, Jesus says, all things are yours—all things are yours. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Rust and moth can't take away true possessions.

And what about being? We're talking here about doing, serving God. Having, all things are yours. What about being? Well, dear friend, you are a child of God. Did you know that I am the son of a king? You talk about being high up. Friend, I'm a royal blueblood. Just call me prince Adrian. I am somebody, and so are you. And so when the devil comes along with his temptations, he says, I'm going to help you to do something. I say, I'm already doing something, thank you. I'm going to help you to have something. I already have something thank you. I'm going to help you to be something. I already am something. You see, the devil could not get through to the Lord Jesus because Jesus knew the principle of satisfaction.

Let me tell you how to handle temptation. Every temptation that you'll ever face is a temptation to fulfill a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way. Find out what the legitimate desire the devil has perverted is, and fulfill it a legitimate way, and you won't have any itch the devil can scratch. There's the principle of satisfaction.

#### **F. The Principle of Supplication**

Now, here's the last principle, and I'll be finished. Here's the sixth principle. It's the principle of supplication. It is the principle of prayer. Now, Jesus said to His disciples, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Now, sometimes we don't read the Bible carefully, and I want you to go back and look in Luke chapter three if you will. And look in verse twenty one. "Now when all of the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized", now watch that next little phrase, "And praying the heaven was opened."

Why was all of this true about Him? Why was He pleasing to the Father? Why did He obey? Why was He filled with the Holy Spirit? Why, my dear friend, was He able to apply the Scripture and love the Scripture? Because Jesus knew the principle of supplication. He knew how to pray. He lived by prayer. If you are not a man a woman of prayer, you are going down. None other than the Son of God said, watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

### **Conclusion**

Now friend, there's a warning. There is no person who is immune. There is no period that is exempt. There is no place that is off bounds. There is no point at which Satan will not tempt you. He did to the Son of God. But if you will say I am by faith the son of God, if you will say, Oh, dear God, I want to be obedient and submissive to you so that you can be well pleased in me. If you will say come Holy Spirit of God and fill me moment by moment as I walk with you. If you will come along and say oh my dear God, teach me the Scripture so that I may know your Word and use your Word as a sword. If you will

say Lord, help me to find my satisfaction in you, and say it in prayer, I'll promise you, you will stand and tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day. You'll sing it, say it and mean it, oh victory in Jesus.

All right, it's check-up time. This principle of sonship. Are you saved? Just answer that yes or no. I say answer it yes or no, are you saved? Answer it in your heart. Do you know you're saved? The principle of submission. Is God well pleased with you right now? If He's not, what do you expect to do when the devil comes? Can God look at you and say, there is my son, my daughter, in whom I am well pleased? The principle of spiritual power. Are you consciously filled with the Holy Spirit? The principle of Scripture. Are you committed to a regular program of Bible study? The principle of satisfaction. Are you finding your all in Jesus Christ? Being, having, doing. Are you? The principle of supplication. Are you like your Lord? A man, a woman of prayer? Are you?

Father God, teach us what we need to know and do. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

# Discovering Your Authority in Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: June 1, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 7:1-9**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Source of Spiritual Authority
- II. The Scope of Spiritual Authority
- III. The Strength of Spiritual Authority
- IV. The Submission of Spiritual Authority

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**urn now, if you will tonight, to Luke chapter 7—Luke 7:1-9. I want us to think tonight on this subject: “Discovering Your Authority in Christ”—“Discovering Your Authority in Christ.” And I want to read from Luke chapter 7, the first nine verses: *“Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority...”*—now I especially want you to notice that phrase—*“For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick”* (Luke 7:1-10).

Jesus marveled at this particular centurion because he had an insight into the kingdom of heaven and the way things worked in the kingdom of heaven that just was an insight,

though he was a gentile, what we would call today someone outside the household of faith, a gentile, and yet he had discovered more than any of the Jews that Jesus had met in His day. Now someone described our generation this way. They said, “We are a needy generation, sick of our conditions, unable to create better, too ignorant to explain life, too shallow to endure life, too bitter to enjoy life, and too weak to overcome life.”

Well, that’s not the way you ought to be if you’re a child of God. But even many of God’s children are living beneath their privileges and they have not learned to exercise the authority that God has given them. And the devil is doing all he can do to pull the veil of darkness over this truth, because the devil does not want you to know the authority that you have over him. The devil does not want you to live in the realm of spiritual authority.

I heard years ago about General Wainwright. General Wainwright was one of our great American generals who was taken captive by the Japanese in World War II and held in a Japanese prison camp, and the Japanese soldiers loved to abuse him, and to ridicule him, and to taunt him, and to humiliate him, because they knew that he was a great American general, and now they had the authority over him, he had been taken captive. But one day there came a little airplane and landed on that island where General Wainwright was held prisoner, and there went an envoy in and delivered a message, and it said that the war was over, and the allies had won, and that Japan had been defeated, and that Japan had surrendered, and that the base was now under the control of the United States of America, and all of the prisoners of war were now free men.

Well, that word came to the command base and it was delivered to General Wainwright, but somehow it did not get out to some of the soldiers; or if it had gotten out to some of the soldiers, they had not quite understood it. And Wainwright was walking through that compound when some of the soldiers started to abuse him and to ridicule him and to try to debase him. And this general drew himself up and squared back his shoulders, and said, “I’ll have no more of that. I am in control here. I am in authority here.” And he was.

Now the devil hopes that you won’t discover the authority that you have. The devil hopes that you’ll not learn that the war has already been won and that Jesus is victorious and that you don’t have to take his abuse, you don’t have to take his belittling, you don’t have to his conniving power over you. Jesus came to give you authority over all the power of the enemy.

You see, man was meant to live here on earth with authority. The Bible tells us in the Book of Genesis that when God created man—Genesis chapter 1, verse 26—God said, “*Let them have dominion*” (Genesis 1:26); that is, “let man rule.” Man is meant to be king of the earth, woman is meant to be queen over all of God’s creation, but man, the first Adam, through disobedience, lost it all. He forfeited his rights, he gave over his God-given

authority to the devil, and the devil became *“the god of this world”* (2 Corinthians 4:4), spelled with a little *g*. The New Testament calls him *“the god of this age,”* or *“the god of this world,”* but the Lord Jesus, the second Adam, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus, came back and defeated Satan on the cross and gained back man’s lost dominion. And now the Lord Jesus wants to give back to us our authority. He wants us to have our authority, because He’s won it back for us, and He wants to give it to us.

Now if you don’t understand the principle of spiritual authority, even though you’re a Christian, you can be living a defeated life if you don’t understand the principle of spiritual authority; even though you’re a Christian, your home can go on the rocks. If you don’t understand the principle of spiritual authority, churches can be split and splintered and fractured. If you don’t understand the principle of spiritual authority, your prayer life can be weakened. And your witness will be sterile because you don’t understand spiritual authority.

Now Luke chapter 7 teaches us this marvelous wonderful lesson of spiritual authority. And there are three or four things that I want us to learn about spiritual authority from this passage of Scripture.

## **I. The Source of Spiritual Authority**

The very first thing that I want you to notice is the source of spiritual authority, from whence is spiritual authority. The key is in verse 8: *“For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.”*

Now what is the source of any authority that anyone has? The source of any authority that anyone has is an appeal to a higher power. Authority is legal power that is granted to someone to act on the behalf of that person who has granted that power. And so authority is always rooted in a higher power.

Now what happened to this particular man? This particular man was a centurion, which means that he was a soldier, and he had a servant who served him, and the servant was sick, and the centurion loved his servant very much, and he had heard of Jesus and Jesus’ power to perform miracles, so some friends of the centurion went and asked Jesus if He would come and heal this man’s servant, because as they said, he was worthy.

Now the centurion wasn’t that kind of man. He was a very humble man. He didn’t think he was worthy. He said, *“Lord, I wasn’t worthy to go ask you, and I’m not worthy that you should come unto my roof.”* But he said, *“Lord, if you would just speak the word—just speak the word—my servant would be healed.”* And this is why the centurion was so sure that all Jesus had to do was to speak the word and his servant would be healed. The

centurion gave the explanation in verse 8, for he said, “For I too, just like you, Jesus, am a man under authority.”

Now Jesus was over everything, it seems. And it seemed like this centurion, this soldier, was over everything, because he wasn’t an ordinary soldier. He was like a general. He was a big shot. But he said, “Jesus, all you have to do is speak the word, for I also am a man under authority”—not a man with authority, but a man under authority. That is, “I have people over me. Therefore I say to this soldier, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and I say to this soldier, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and I say to this servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” Now what was he saying, he was saying in effect, “Jesus, I understand how you work. You are under a higher power.”

You see, God the Son, the Lord Jesus in His humanity, for He was as much man as though He wasn’t God at all. And don’t miss the manhood of the Lord Jesus, because if you do, you are going to miss one of the great blessings of the Bible. Sometimes we overcompensate to prove that Jesus was God. And He was. But we so overcompensate that we leave out the humanity of Jesus. And when we leave out the humanity of Jesus, we leave out a great blessing, because it was the humanity of Jesus that teaches us how we are to live as humans in this spiritual world. And you see, if you think of Jesus as some kind of phantom who was masquerading as man but wasn’t truly man, then we will miss the whole blessing. He was as much man as though He were not God at all. And He was as much God as though He were not man at all. He was not half God and half man; not all man and no God; not all God and no man; but the God-man.

There was never another like Him. But He was man, very man, and as man He had the limitations of the flesh like we have, because He emptied Himself of all of the glory and all of the power and all of the majesty and all of the might that was inherently His as perfect God. “*And being found in fashion of a man, he humbled himself*”; He “*became obedient*” (Philippians 2:8)—“*obedient.*” Jesus lived a life of obedience unto the Father. Jesus in His humanity recognized the Father’s authority and power over Him. And so Jesus always did what the Father wished. He said, “I do always my Father’s will” (John 8:29). “What I hear I speak; what I see, I do” (John 8:28). Jesus was a man who lived His life in submission to a higher authority. And because Jesus lived His life in submission to a higher authority, Jesus therefore had authority.

Now understand, this man was in the army. He said, “Jesus, I know how you work, because I too am a man under authority.” You see, the army has a hierarchy. There’s the supreme commander-in-chief in an army, and then around him there’s that cluster of great generals, and then under him are lesser generals, and under them are other officers and colonels and majors and lieutenants and sergeants, and finally the buck private. You know, down here, there’s this great chain of command in the army. And how is the captain going to

have authority over his lieutenants? I'll tell you how a captain is going to have authority over his lieutenants: He's going to stay under the authority of that colonel. And how is a colonel going to have authority over his captain? I'll tell you how: He's going to stay under the authority of those generals. And how are those generals going to have authority? I'll tell you how: They're going to stay under the authority of that commander-in-chief of that army.

You see, dear friends, there's a spiritual principle. And get it down straight, and get it down big, and get it down good: You can never, never be over unless you're willing to be under. You'll never be over unless you're willing to be under. You see, authority does not derive in itself; it always comes from a higher power. And this man looked to a higher power for his authority. And he knew that the same thing was true in the realm of the spirit.

What is my authority as a believer? Let me show you how we as believers must look to a higher power. Look in Matthew chapter 28 and verse 18—Matthew chapter 28 and verse 18. This is the Great Commission. Now look in verse 18: *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth...”*—because this is literally the word. Although it is translated here in the King James Version, “all power,” it's the Greek word *exousia*, and it means “authority”—*“all [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore”* (Matthew 28:18–19). Now notice the *therefore*. What is the *therefore* there for? *“All [authority] is given unto me...Go ye therefore.”* That is, “I am giving you authority because I have authority, and your authority comes from me.”

It's not assumed authority; it is not manufactured. Our authority as believers, my authority to preach the Word of God, is because the Lord Jesus has commissioned me. A preacher ought to preach with authority. I don't think he ought to be cocky about it, I don't believe he ought to be a smart aleck, but I don't want one of these finger thumpers to be my pastor and say, you know, “I don't know where I'm going; you come follow me.” I want a preacher who preaches with authority, not an arrogant person, but a person who realizes the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory, who has all authority, has given him, therefore, that same authority and told him to go and preach.

Let me show you again. Look in 1 Peter chapter 3 for a moment. This was especially a blessing to me as I looked at this scripture here not long ago. Look in verse 22. It speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible speaks of Christ in these terms: as one *“who [has] gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and power being made subject unto him”* (1 Peter 3:22). That is, Jesus Christ is over all, and it is because Jesus Christ is over all that we have our power, we have our authority. Our authority is derived authority from a higher authority.

## II. The Scope of Spiritual Authority

Turn to Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 19 again, and look at the same idea of the authority that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. We've seen it in Matthew 28: 18. We've seen it in 1 Peter 3, verse 22. Now look in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 19. The Bible speaks of our eyes being opened that we might understand *"what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:19–23).

Now ladies and gentlemen, the source of spiritual authority is a higher authority. Our higher authority is Jesus, who has all authority now. And that is just it. The scope of our authority is this: We ought to have authority in every area and in every realm. You see, all things are under the feet of Jesus. There's nothing that is not yet put under the feet of Jesus, except death, and death will soon be put under the feet of Jesus when Jesus destroys death. And there will be no more death, but all things are potentially through the cross now under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you were to study Mark chapter 4 and 5—and don't do it now—you'll find a marvelous illustration of all things being under the feet of Jesus. You'll find Jesus stilling the storm, which tells us that Jesus is master over disaster. In that same chapter you'll find the Lord Jesus Christ healing a demon-possessed man, which tells us that Jesus is Lord over demons. In that chapter 5 you'll find Him healing a woman with an issue of blood, which tells us that Jesus is Lord over disease. And in that same chapter you'll find the Lord Jesus raising one from the dead, which tells us that the Lord Jesus is Lord over death. Whether it be disaster, whether it be demons, whether it be disease, whether it be death, Jesus Christ is Lord. And so, Jesus has authority over this.

"Well," you say, "that's Jesus; that's not me." But friend, Jesus has transferred that authority to us. That's the point I want you to see. The authority, the power, that was in Christ, and is in Christ as He's seated at the right hand of God, has been given to us. And the Lord is giving us dominion not just to rule some day, but to rule now.

## III. The Strength of Spiritual Authority

Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 10 for a moment, and verse 19. We were in Luke chapter 7; just turn to Luke chapter 10 for a moment, and here is a key, key verse on living with spiritual authority. Jesus said, *"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and*

*scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall be any means hurt you"* (Luke 10:19). Now that's a very interesting passage because the word *power* is used there twice. Notice in the first part, "*Behold, I give unto you power,*" and just draw a circle around that, and then later on he says, "*and over all the power of the enemy.*"

Now there are two words here that are used for power; you don't see that in the English language, but there are two words for power. The first word is the word *exousia* that we've already talked about, and that word means "authority," so read it this way, "Behold, I give you authority over all of the power of the enemy," and you'll have a tremendous spiritual thought. "Behold, I give you authority over all the power of the enemy." The second word is *dunamis*, and Jesus says, "Behold, I give you *exousia* over all the *dunamis* of the enemy." Now the word *dunamis* means power, but a different kind of power; and it's the word we get our word *dynamite* from, or it's the word we get our word *dynamic* or *dynamo* from. And it represents force. But Jesus said, "I give you authority over all the force of the enemy." Now you're learning a great spiritual secret, You see, you do not defeat the devil with strength; you defeat the devil with authority.

Now we've used this illustration so many times, but we have to come back to it again because it so perfectly illustrates what we're talking about. Out here in the middle of the road may be a policeman, and he has on the uniform and the shield, and he has a silver whistle, and he blows that whistle and holds up his hand in front of a semi-truck and says, "Stop," or he may say, "Stop, in the name of the law." Now that semi-truck stops. Why does that driver stop? Let's say the policeman weighs 150 pounds soaking wet and full of bananas. Now let's say that that policeman is there, and he holds up his hand, and he says, "Stop." Well, all that trucker has to do if he doesn't want to stop is just put it in grandma and just flatten that policeman and just keep on going. But he stops.

Now what does the policeman stop him with? He doesn't stop him with force; he stops him with authority. Now it is force that stops him, but not the force of the policeman. Behind this policeman is a city full of policeman, and behind them is the state militia and the National Guard, and behind that is the force and the power of the United States government, and so forth. And you see, this little man who's standing out there with that little whistle and that badge, who says, "Stop," is acting upon authority, not power.

Now when Jesus sent these ones out, He said, "I give you authority over all the power of the enemy." Is Satan wiser than you? Yes, with a perverted wisdom. Is Satan stronger than you? Yes, with a malevolent strength. Is Satan capable of doing things you cannot do? Yes. Does Satan have more force than you? Does Satan have more power than you? Yes. But you stop him in the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you learn to fight your spiritual battles not in your strength, then you are going to see Satan began to cower and

quiver in front of you. That's why I said that the devil hopes you never learn this truth, the truth of being under authority so that you can be over authority, and that you can have the authority that God wants you to have.

A little boy asked his daddy, "Daddy, how big is the devil?" And the father said, "Son, I don't know if you can say how big the devil is." "Well," he said, "Daddy, is the devil bigger than I am?" And the dad said, "Yes, son, he's bigger than you." "Well," Daddy, "is he bigger than Mommy?" "Yes." "Daddy, is he bigger than you are?" Little boys like to look up to their dads. "Yes, son, I'm afraid that he's bigger than I am." Well, the little boy is getting frightened now, but he asks one more thing: "Daddy, is he bigger than Jesus?" "No, son, he's not bigger than Jesus." Then the little boy said, "Then I'm not afraid of him." *"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength" (Psalm 8:2).*

Dear friends, it is not your strength; it is His strength, it is His power. The One who said, "Behold, all authority is given unto me," the One who is "far above all principalities and powers," this is the One that has given His spiritual authority to you. "Behold, I give you authority over all the power, the force, the strength, of the enemy."

#### **IV. The Submission of Spiritual Authority**

Now again I want to come back and emphasize this spiritual concept. And get it down big. You will never be over unless you are willing to be under. Spiritual authority is not for people who have a spirit of rebellion.

Do you know what the Bible says is going to be the spirit of the last days? Lawlessness—lawlessness. The Bible says that "because lawlessness abounds, the love of many shall wax cold." We are going to live, and we are living, in days of abounding lawlessness and abating love. *"Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold"* (Matthew 24:12). And lawlessness is the spirit of our age.

Young people are being told, "Don't let anybody tell you what to do. And if that teacher gives you a hard time at school, Mom and Dad will give that teacher a hard time." "Look, child, you are somebody. Don't let anybody have authority over you. Don't let anybody boss you around." You know, the idea is, "Express yourself, exert yourself, and don't let anybody have authority over you."

Now friend, as long as you refuse authority over you, whether it be authority in the schoolroom, authority in the government, authority in the home, or authority in the church, wherever God has placed authority over you, if you face that authority with a rebellious spirit, you will not have the authority that God wants you to have. Did you know that there are authorities everywhere? Did you know that, teenagers? On these church grounds, there is authority. Suppose you are running through the halls and an adult says to you, "Don't run

through the halls,” what do you say? “Who are you? Bug off.” Or should you say, “Yes sir, I will slow down”? You say, “Well, who is he? Is he a deacon or somebody?” No, he’s just an adult. That’s all: just an adult. The Bible teaches that the younger should be subject to the older (1 Peter 5:5).

That authority is everywhere, see? Now a lot of young people don’t think it. They say, “Hey, I’m not going to let that guy tell me what to do.” Okay, young person, you have the spirit of rebellion, and the devil has you for fair game. Do you wonder why you don’t have any power in your witness? Do you wonder why the Bible is a closed book to you? Look, there’s authority everywhere. You go into a restaurant.

Let me tell you something. Some of our young people went into a restaurant in this city and embarrassed the cause of Christ because they made little monkeys of themselves in that restaurant. Did you know that? They cut up. They didn’t even leave the waitress a proper tip. They fooled around and everybody knew they were from Bellevue. They made little monkeys of themselves and disgraced the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know who’s an authority in that restaurant? The owner and the waitress.

I went into a restaurant one time with some preachers, and we wanted to have some fellowship, and I said, “Well, let’s just put some tables together here.” You know, everybody likes to go in a restaurant and sit around some tables. I said, “Let’s just put some tables together here and we’ll sit down.” And the waitress said, “No, you can’t do that.” “Oh,” I thought to myself, “oh, yes I can. All I have to do is just drag it over here. Big strong preachers—let’s just do it.” But she said, “No, you can’t do that.” And logically we could do it, and I could fix it where it wouldn’t block the aisles. I had it all figured out. And there was something in me that said, “Don’t let that little lady tell you what to do. You’re smarter than she is. And after all, these are your preacher friends. Just do it.” And the Lord said to me, “Adrian, you can’t do it. She’s in authority here, not you—not you.” And I had to place myself under the authority of a waitress because that was her sphere of authority.

I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman, there is authority everywhere, and this authority is given of God. And if you’re one of these people that think that rules are made for everybody else, but rules are not made for you; if you’re one who thinks that you can talk in the Sunday School class, or leave early, or do this thing or that thing, and that you’re not going to be under those that God has placed over you because you’re smarter, wiser, you have your own way, mister—you’re going to be a spiritual zilch. Everywhere you look, God has placed authority. And you will not be over until you learn to be under.

Now let me just explain it this way: The reason, you see, that some people don’t have more authority is they can’t be trusted with it. *To know the release of the Spirit you must*

*know the restraint of the Spirit*—to know the release of the Spirit you must know the restraint of the Spirit.

Have you taken your children out to teach them how to drive? I've had that experience four blessed times. Now I'm going to tell you that there is one thing that I start with when I start teaching my children how to drive. The first thing that I show them even before I show them the ignition key is that thing called the brake. "That's what stops this critter; that thing right there. Put your foot on it. That is the brake." And that's the first thing I want them to learn. I never say, "That is the accelerator; try it out." Now that comes later. First the brake, then the accelerator, amen? You see, before I want them to learn how to make it go, I want them to learn how to make it stop.

And before God gives you spiritual authority to go, God must first teach you spiritual restraint to teach you to stop. And if you don't know how to use the brake, I'm just sorry to tell you, dear friends: God is never going to teach you how to use the accelerator. If God can't trust you with that power to control it, He's not going to be able to give it to you. And if you have a rebellious spirit, if you don't learn how to be under those that God has set over you, if you do not learn what this centurion learned, that "I too am a man under authority," then you are not going to have authority.

Do you know what I look for in a staff member? Well, let's talk about Elmer Bailey again. Do you know what I look for in a staff member? And I see it in Elmer Bailey. I look for a man—almost without exception there are two qualities that I look for if I want to call a person to be a staff member in the church where I'm the pastor. Number one: Does he know and love the Lord Jesus Christ personally and devotedly? Number two: Does he understand spiritual authority? Does he understand the chain of command? Does he understand the authority in the church? Does he understand his relationship to the pastor and his chain of authority? For I know that if I have a staff member that has a rebellious spirit and does not get under those that are in the leadership of the church that, dear friend, he will never make that kind of spiritual man that he ought to make.

Let me give you a wonderful verse of Scripture—Psalm 119, verse 54—Psalm 119, verse 54: "*Thy statutes*"—and do you know what the word *statutes* means? "Thy laws." A statute is a law. "*Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage*" (Psalm 119:54). How can laws and statutes become songs? How does God unite law books with songbooks? I'll tell you why and how. You see, laws are not meant to be a burden; laws are meant to be a blessing. Every law has a song written on the back of it. And when you keep the law, you're going to find out that duty turns to delight.

Now if I were to walk over here and try and play the piano, it would be a hopeless, discordant mess, because the piano operates according to laws. There are laws, fixed laws

of music. And yet, when a person masters these laws, and when a person submits himself to these laws, then drudgery turns to delight. And a person who has subjected himself to the laws of music, or a woman who has learned those laws, and a person who has submitted himself to those laws, and that person who has come under those laws, all of the sudden has authority over that piano, you see? And what some people call piano practice, that is meant to restrict, is also the piano practice that enables that person to sit at that piano with perfect liberty and just let that melody just dance off those fingertips onto all 88 keys.

Isn't that marvelous how God turns statutes into songs, and how law books become songbooks, because every law has a song written on the back of it? And what I'm trying to tell you is that when you learn authority and you submit to authority, at that same moment, you learn freedom, perfect freedom.

Have you yielded yourself to the lordship of Christ? I want to tell you again, this centurion learned something that was very wonderful. He said, "I too, like you, Jesus, am a man set under authority; so I know how you operate. All you have to do is just speak the word and my servant will be healed."

Now it's so wonderful to be able to have authority. This centurion enjoyed his authority. "Why," he said, "look. I say to that soldier, 'Go'—'Yes sir,' and he goes. I say to this soldier, 'Soldier, come'—'Yes sir,' and he comes." How would you like to have some spiritual soldiers like that? I say to this servant, "Servant, do this," and he does it. You say, "Boy, that's the way to live." Well, you're right. And that's the way God wants you to live. God wants you to have spiritual soldiers to protect you. And God wants you to have spiritual servants to serve you and to wait upon you. And God wants no enemy to be able to stand in front of you. It is not God's will that his servants live defeated lives, but that we reign with the Lord Jesus.

But now there are many of us who have no authority, and because of that the name of Jesus is being drug through the muck and the mire. There are spiritual leaders with no authority, pastors who don't have any authority. You know, Jesus spoke of the blind leading the blind (Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39). There's something almost that bad, and it's "the bland leading the bland." And there are a lot of pastors who are that way, who don't have spiritual authority over the church, I believe. And I'm not just saying this because I'm the pastor. I have no desire to be a big shot—if I know my heart, I don't think I do—but I believe the pastor ought to be God's authority in the church. I really do. I don't mean that he's a dictator or anything like that, but he's to be a leader.

And it's a spiritual authority. You know, the Bible says that Jesus spoke as one having authority, but not as the scribes (Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:22). The scribes, who had that

overweening, self-conscious authority, they loved to lord it over people, but Jesus taught as one having authority.

You know, a pastor is to lead the flock. That means he's a shepherd. Have you ever seen a shepherd get all the sheep out there and say, "All you sheep who want to graze over here, say, 'Baaaaa,' and all you sheep who want to graze over here, say, 'Baaaaa'; now the baaaa's have it." No. He says, "This is what we're going to do."

Every church in America that is growing that I know anything about, every great soul-winning church, has a pastor who is God's man and is leading the church with spiritual authority. Now I believe that. I've said it, and I kind of smile when I say it, because it's an oversimplification, but this is what I believe. *If your pastor is a man of God, you ought to follow him. If he's not, you ought to fire him.* Really, God gives the churches spiritual authority.

Now that doesn't mean that he has unlimited power in the church; it doesn't mean there are no checks and balances, because if a pastor falls into sin or goes into error, God has ways to check and correct that, but I'm saying that when that man is walking in the Spirit, when he's preaching the Word of God, when he's God's man, he's God's gift to the church. But I see so many churches in America today that are being unraveled because they do not understand the principle of spiritual authority.

I hear some people say stupidly, "Well, a Baptist church is a democracy." Friend, that *ain't* so. And if you think a Baptist Church is a democracy, I want you to find one shred of Scripture and show it to me in the Bible, okay? Just show me. If anybody knows one right now, just stand up and speak. No, Jesus is the head of the church, not the people; He is the head of the church. It is a theocracy, and Jesus leads the church. And Jesus sets His spiritual authorities in the church, and they're to follow him. It is true that the consensus of the group may be taken through prayer, but even that prayer is not to seek *my* will, but it is to find His will and do it. He is to be the Lord of the Church.

I see Christians who have no authority. They are rebels. And the devil laughs at them and mocks at them because they have a rebellious spirit. And because they have a rebellious spirit they do not have power over the devil.

I'll tell you something else that bothers me and frightens me a little bit, is to hear Christians with rebellious spirits make light of the devil. And they call the devil by nicknames, and you know "ole smutty face," "ole slew foot," "ole so-and-so," and they talk about how they're not afraid of the devil, and going to spit in the devil's eye, and all this sort of stuff. Let me tell you something, friend. If you have a rebellious spirit, you're going to be in for a rude awakening; the devil will make mincemeat out of you.

I read in the Bible about seven sons of one called Sceva who found the man who was demon-possessed, and they assayed forth to exorcise that man and to cast the demons out of him, and they said, “We adjure you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches, come out of him.” And the demons in that man said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” And that one man turned on those seven men, left them wounded, bleeding, naked, pleading for their lives, because they had a secondhand religion. “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” (Acts 19:14–16).

Friend, there are a lot of Christians today who have become the devil’s playthings because they have refused spiritual authority, the authority that God has put over them. There are mothers today who have no authority over their children. They say, “Why can’t I make that child behave? Why can’t I do what I ought to do? What’s wrong with me as a mother? Why am I failing?” Well, there are many reasons perhaps, but I want to tell you the first place I’d look if I were you. If your children do not respect your authority over them, I would ask myself, lady, have you submitted yourself to your husband? Because there’s no way on God’s green earth that you will be able to have authority over your children if you refuse to submit to your husband. Did you hear that? You cannot be over unless you’re willing to be under. It’s just that plain—it’s just that plain. There are mothers who have no authority because they have a spirit of rebellion.

There are young people—and I thank God for our young people, they’re a great group of young people; you know, of all of the youth choirs in America, that’s one of them. No, they really are, they’re great young people. I really thank God for them, but they’re not little angels yet; not a one of them have sprouted wings and grown halos. And kids, I want to tell you something. The reason that you don’t get your prayers answered any more than you do, the reason that you don’t understand the Bible any more than you do, the reason that your witness doesn’t have any more power than it does, with a great number of you is this: you have refused to submit to your parents; you are not submissive.

“Oh,” you say, “well, they make me do it, and I do it.” I’m not talking about making you do it. Listen. That kind of obedience is not Christian obedience. That’s not honoring your father and your mother; that is not truly submitting to your authority, because they threaten you with not being able to use the car, or having to stay in, or whatever, or unless you do this thing or that thing.

Do you gladly, with a smile, winsomely, happily, say, “Yes ma’am,” “Yes sir,” to your parents? Do you submit to that authority that God has put over you? When you begin to submit to the authority that God has given, the authority that God has given in your youth director, in your choir director, the authority that God has given in your pastor, the authority that God has given in your Sunday School teacher, your Training Union director,

the authority that God has given in your mother and your father, young people, when you start submitting to that authority in the schoolroom, you're going to find out that you will never have power until you do.

You will explode with power. And when you read the Bible, the truths will leap up off the page into your hearts, because you have learned to be under. And then you'll learn that God does not give His authority to rebels.

## **Conclusion**

And before God shows you where that accelerator is, mister, He's going to show you where that brake is. And if you would learn something of the release of the Spirit, you're going to have to learn the restraint of the Spirit. It is not bad; it is good, because statutes become songs, and when we get under, suddenly we discover we're over, and we're living that life that God wants us to live. No power on earth or hell can suppress the saint of God who has discovered the authority that he has from heaven.

# Strength Through Authority

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 1, 1996

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 7:1–10

*“For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.”*

LUKE 7:8

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Luke chapter 7—and when you’ve found it, look up here. May I tell you, again, that you could discover no greater truth than the marvelous, wonderful truth of kingdom authority? You could enjoy no greater blessing than to enter into the truth of kingdom authority. But having said that, we have many—and some of them in this church today—who are living defeated lives. Somebody has described our generation this way: “We are a needy generation, sick of our conditions, unable to create better ones, too ignorant to explain life, too shallow to endure it, too bitter to enjoy it, and too weak to overcome it.” I hope that’s not you. But it could be you. But it need not be you, if you will discover a wonderful truth called kingdom authority.

Now, let’s look in Luke chapter 7, verse 1: *“Now when he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of*

*Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority...*—now I want you to understand this verse is the key verse—*“For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”* (Luke 7:1–9)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, look up here just parenthetically before I go one step further. If Jesus Christ marveled at this man, I mean, absolutely marveled at him; if Jesus Christ was astounded by what this man said, then you ought to take note of it. And if Jesus Christ said that of all of the sons of Abraham that He knew this man had more faith than any He had met, don't you think you ought to pay attention?

Now, folks, we're dealing with something that is significant. Don't miss that. Don't miss what the Lord Jesus said. He said—I'll read verse 9 again—*“When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.”* (Luke 7:9–10)

Now again I want to say that Satan, that sinister minister of misinformation, will do all that he can do to keep you from learning the truth of your kingdom authority in the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants to pull the veil of darkness over this truth. Now the Lord did not create you and bring you into this world to be a victim of Satan, for you to live a crushed and defeated life. To the contrary, our Lord expects you to reign, as we're going to see, not someday in the sweet by-and-by, but right now in the nasty now-and-now. You are to have victory over Satan in this day and in this age.

Now, let's back up again. We're talking about the principles of kingdom authority. And remember that when God created Adam and Eve, He put them on the earth. And the Bible says in the book of Genesis that God told them to have dominion. (Genesis 1:28) Dominion: that means they are to reign! They are to rule! They were the king and queen of this earth. But they disobeyed God. They yielded everything to Satan. They lost their dominion. They lost their crown. Rather than having dominion, they became slaves of Satan. They became servants to Satan. And when Adam rebelled against

heaven, Adam lost his authority on earth, and Adam became a slave to Satan. And a child of a slave is a slave also. And therefore all of those who are in Adam became slaves of Satan. But the Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth. The last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, won back for us the victory that the first Adam lost. And we are able to sing together as a congregation, “Oh, victory in Jesus!”

Now we need to understand this, because if we don’t understand it, no matter how true it may be, it will do us no good whatsoever. **There was an emancipation proclamation, when Abraham Lincoln set the slaves free in the South. They were free—set free! And thank God for that. But did you know that many slaves continued on the plantation? Many continued to serve their old masters. Why? Two reasons: one, some of them didn’t get the news; secondly, some of them couldn’t believe it; it seemed too good to be true. And I’ll tell you, there are some people in this world today who have not yet gotten the news of our emancipation in the Lord Jesus Christ and of our kingdom authority. And to others, and some in this place right now, it will seem too good to be true.**

Now we often hear people say, “Oh, the truth will set you free.” Well, be careful: the truth doesn’t set you free if you don’t know the truth. What did our Lord Jesus say about that in John 8, verse 31? *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* (John 8:31–32)

Now what I’m trying to do in this series of messages is to help you to know the truth. Now we’re not talking about overcoming Satan in the world to come. We’re talking about now, where you work this afternoon, and tomorrow morning. You see, we lost it in Adam; we got it back in Christ. Here’s a key verse. Put this one in your margin. Romans chapter 5 and verse 17—it sums up everything that I’m trying to say: *“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one;”—*who was that one man who offended? Adam. Who took over, then? Death. Death reigned because of Adam’s offense and because of Adam’s sin—*“much more”—*and thank God for that *“much more”—“they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”* (Romans 5:17) *“Shall reign in life”—*not reigning somewhere, but right now! As I say, not just in the sweet by-and-by.

Now here’s the story. There was a man, a centurion. That means he was an army officer. He had one hundred men under his command at his post. He was a very important man in the Roman army. He was a Gentile. And he had a servant that was sick. And he was concerned about his servant, who was about to die. People came to Jesus and said, “This is a good man. You ought to go over there and help him. Heal his servant.” So Jesus is going to this man’s house, and the man sends out a message. He says, “Listen: I didn’t feel that I was worthy to come to you; I’m not worthy that you

should come under my roof. But all you have to do is to give the command, and my servant will be healed.”

And then he explained why he said that. He said, “For I too am a man set under authority.” That is, “I have officers over me. I’m a centurion. But there’s a general over me. And over that general is the emperor. I understand that I am under authority; therefore I have authority. Therefore I can say to this servant, ‘Go,’ and he goes. I can say to this soldier, ‘Come,’ and he comes. Why? Because I am under authority. And because I am under authority, I am over these who are under me.”

Simple—that’s the way it works. He was a military man. He understood the way things worked in the military. And when he said that, Jesus marveled. He said, “He’s got it! He has seen it! He understands it! Why can’t even the children of Israel understand this? I haven’t seen faith like this in all the land of Israel. He understands kingdom authority.” And Jesus marveled.

Now you need to understand today this same kingdom authority. What do we mean by *authority*? It means “the official, legal right to act.” Now we’re going to learn four things today about kingdom authority that come out of this text, okay? And I don’t want this to be academic; I want to go beyond academics into your life.

## I. The Source of Kingdom Authority

First of all, the source of kingdom authority: All authority comes from a higher power. It comes down. Authority comes from above. *You have to be under authority to have authority.* “I also am a man set under authority.” That’s what he says there in verse 8. Authority comes from above. Therefore, any authority that you may hold is no better or stronger than the one who is over you—because, you see, you have to have someone to back up the authority that you hold.

When a policeman comes and knocks on the door; there’s been a disturbance, he knocks on the door, and the person behind the door may say, “Who’s there?” And the policeman will say, “Open the door, in the name of the law.” Now what this man is doing is just appealing to a higher authority. Now he doesn’t just come and say, “This is John Jones: would you please open the door?” “Open the door, in the name of the law.” Well, where does he get this authority? Well, he’s a policeman; he’s been commissioned. So behind that badge is the police department of the city. Well, suppose the man doesn’t want the police department of the city to interfere with him. Well, behind the police department of the city is the state militia. Well, suppose he won’t obey that. Behind that is the National Guard and the forces of the United States if there comes to be an insurrection. That one man is backed up by incredible authority. And what we need to understand is that authority comes from above.

### A. Identified with Jesus in His Death

Now the reason that God's children have authority is because of the Lord that is over them. Now, let me give you another great verse that will help you understand this—1 John chapter 4 and verse 17. I'm going to take just a phrase out of that verse. Don't turn to it, but jot it down. "As he is,"—talking about Jesus—"so are we"—now here's the key phrase—"in this world." (1 John 4:17) As Jesus is, so are we, because we are in Him, and He is in us. This is the doctrine of identification. When He died, He died for us, and so we died with Him, right? His death had your name on it. He died for you. You died with Him. Are you identified with Him in His death? Say *amen*. Okay?

### B. Identified with Jesus in His Resurrection

Now, secondly, when He rose, you rose with Him. You are identified, united with Him, in resurrection. The Bible says, "If we've been buried in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." (Romans 6:5) Jesus died for us, and then Jesus rose for us. He died for us. He gave Himself for us. And then He rose to give Himself to us. And so we have resurrection life. Now when Jesus ascended, we ascended with Him. And the Bible teaches that we are seated with the Lord Jesus in the *heavenlies*, far above all principalities and powers. And so therefore, Jesus' victory is our victory.

Understand this: The authority comes from Jesus, and we are united with Jesus in His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement; and therefore we sing "Victory in Jesus." Does Jesus have dominion over Satan? Does Jesus have authority over demons? Are you in Jesus? Yes. That's the point. It flows from above. If they are subject to Him, they must be subject to us. Now that doesn't mean that you are somebody important; it's Him. "As he is, so are we in this world."

I heard about a man one time who was boasting about taking his pocketknife and cutting the tail off a monstrous lion. Somebody said, "Wow, you are brave! If you cut his tail off, why didn't you just go ahead and cut his head off, too?" "Oh," he said, "somebody had already done that." You see, friend, Jesus is the One who has cut the head off that lion of hell. And because of what He has done, because of His victory, then we have victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what we need to understand is this: what the relationship of Jesus Christ to the church truly is. Don't think of the church as a business with Jesus as the president. The church is a body with Jesus as the head. Do you see the difference? That is, we are organically related to the Lord Jesus Christ. His life is in us. Our authority comes from the Lord Jesus. And that's the reason when Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and sent us out to spread the gospel, He said, "All [authority] is given unto me... Go ye, therefore." (Matthew 28:18–19) "Therefore": "because I have this authority—and now I'm giving you the power of attorney to act for me."

Here's a great verse; it blessed me when I read it last week—1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 22. It speaks of Jesus, *“who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”* (1 Peter 3:22)

## II. The Secret of Kingdom Authority

First point, first truth: the source of kingdom authority. It flows from above. It comes from a higher power. Now that brings us to the secret of kingdom authority. That's the second thing: the secret of kingdom authority. Look again in verse 8: *“For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers.”* I'm under, so I have people over me. Here's the secret. It's very plain. It's very wonderful. You cannot be over until you are under. You cannot have authority until you get under the authority that is over you.

Now that's so simple, but it's so wonderful. You see, all authority is linked to obedience. Why would a person give you authority to act for him when you're disobedient to him? That's the reason that Satan endeavored to get Adam to disobey. When Adam disobeyed, he forfeited his authority.

Now our generation doesn't like the word *authority*. We don't like to be under anybody. I mean, we stick out our chests; we talk about being freeborn Americans. And if you're a baby boomer—how many of you are between thirty and fifty years of age? Just hold up your hand. All right, all the boomers out here. You're the boomers. Oh, you know, let me tell you, if you're part of the boomer generation, you are the first television generation. For you, the television was a third parent. In your lifetime, you've gone through the hula hoop, the Barbie doll, pop psychology, Dr. Spock—many of you have *Spock-marked* kids—Donahue, rock and roll—you watched Elvis Presley wear his clothes out from the inside—the Beatles. And all of that music that you boomers listened to, all of it had a defiant message. It was anti-authority. The authority was called *the man*. You were told, *“Resist the man.”* And authority figures were made fun of. Fathers were Archie Bunker; preachers were Flip Wilson—to be laughed at. And the ideals that were in your generation were this: *“I gotta be me!”* Frankie said, *“I did it my way.”* Burger King says, *“Have it your way.”* *“Do your thing.”* *“If it feels good, do it.”* And many of us dare not realize the vestiges of rebellion that still lurk down in our hearts. We don't want to submit to authority.

And you're looking at a guy, by nature, who is the same way. I was looking for a parking place a while back, and I saw a sign that said, *“Don't even think about parking here.”* I was so full of rebellion, I thought about it. Folks, we all have that thing in us. We don't want anybody to be over us. But God does not give kingdom authority to rebels.

I've often used this illustration. Have you ever tried to teach a child to drive? Well, how many of you have ever tried to teach somebody to drive? A child, anybody else? What is the first thing you showed them? Not even the ignition switch. Certainly not the

accelerator. Not how to put it in drive. The very first thing, if you've got an iota, a modicum, of intelligence: the brake. "Honey, here's how you make it stop. There's the brake." Now, suppose that child that you're teaching, that young teenager, says, "Hey, Dad, I'm not interested in the brake; show me how to make this thing go. I'm not interested in the brake. That is of no importance to me." You just find yourself taking the keys and putting them back in your pocket, isn't that right? Because, you know, if that person is not interested in how to make it stop, you're not interested in telling him how to make it go, isn't that right?

I'm going to tell you this about God the Holy Spirit: *If you do not know the restraint of the Spirit, you will never know the release of the Spirit. If you cannot operate the spiritual brakes, God will never show you the spiritual accelerator.* You see, the reason that many people do not have kingdom authority is they have not learned how to be under and therefore they will not be over.

Now God has authority everywhere. There is the authority of the Word of God. Are you under? There is the authority of the lordship of Christ. Have you submitted to it? There is the authority of the direction of the Holy Spirit. Do you know it? There is to be authority in the home, as we're going to see later on. There is authority in the church. There is authority in the government. There is authority everywhere. When you go to a restaurant, there is authority in that restaurant.

I was with some preachers, some friends; it was a convention. Well, we went into a restaurant. We wanted to be together—you know how preachers like to get together and talk—and we went into the restaurant. And there was not enough room for us to get around one table, so I said, "Well, let's put these two tables together." A waitress came up and said, "Mister, you can't do that." Now, folks, there was no reason I couldn't have done that. It made perfectly good sense. We were not blocking an aisle. It was good for business. Had I been the manager of the restaurant, I would have certainly acquiesced to that. I knew that waitress didn't understand; and, after all, I am the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, and she is a waitress. I want to say this in all seriousness: There are no big shots in the kingdom of heaven. And my thought was, "Oh yeah, we can do it. That's all right, ma'am: it won't matter," and to start to put those tables together. You know what God said to me? God said, "Adrian, you're a rebel. She's in charge here." And He was right. And I had to just say, "Well, we won't do it."

There's authority everywhere—everywhere! And I'm going to tell you this: If you do not learn to be under, you will not be over. And I'll give you the best example of this whole thing—and this humbled me when I found out. Listen. The Lord Jesus Christ was under authority. What did that man say? He looked at Jesus and he said, "*I also am a man under authority.*" He said, "You are under authority."

You say, "Well, to whom was Jesus under authority?" I'm going to show you. Now,

remember that Jesus came here as a man. He showed us not what God was to be like on earth; He showed us what man was to be like on earth. He was God, but He lived a life on this earth as man.

#### **A. Jesus Was Subject to His Father**

And as a man He was subject to His Father. John 17, verse 4: *“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”* (John 17:4) That’s what Jesus said to His Father.

#### **B. Jesus Was Subject to the Holy Spirit**

Jesus was in subjection to the Holy Spirit. Luke 4, verse 1—the Bible says He *“was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”* (Luke 4:1) Subject to the Holy Spirit.

#### **C. Jesus Was Subject to the Word of God**

He was subject to the Word of God. He said, *“The scripture cannot be broken.”* (John 10:35)

#### **D. Jesus Was Subject to His Earthly Parents**

He was subject to His earthly parents. Put this verse down—Luke chapter 2, verse 51: *“And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them”* (Luke 2:51)—that is, to His mother and father; His earthly mother, and Joseph, who was not His true father, but His father on this earth.

#### **E. Jesus Was Subject to the Earthly Government**

The Lord Jesus was subject to earthly government. When there came time to pay taxes, what did Jesus say in Matthew 17, verse 27? *“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.”* (Matthew 17:27) Jesus, the King of glory, paid His taxes.

Point: If Jesus Christ is subject to God the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God; if Jesus Christ was subject to earthly parents; if Jesus Christ was subject to the government under which He lived and operated, who are we to say nobody’s going to tell us what to do? That army officer looked at Jesus Christ and he said, *“I also am a man under authority.”* Now the secret of kingdom authority is plain and clear: You cannot be over unless you’re willing to be under.

### **III. The Scope of Kingdom Authority**

Now, here’s the third thing. We have talked about the source of this authority: authority flows from above. We have talked about the secret of this authority: because it flows

from above, we must get under that authority that is over us so we can be over those things that that authority has set us over. All right now, here's the third thing: the scope of kingdom authority. Into what realms does this authority extend? Well, it is to the things of the Spirit of God. You're in Luke 7; just turn over to Luke chapter 10 and look in verse 18: *"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall be any means hurt you."* (Luke 10:18–19) Now if you have a King James, like I'm reading from, the word *power* is used twice. But they are two different words, and it may be translated this way: "Behold, I give you authority over all the power of the enemy."

Now, what is the scope therefore of our authority? It is over all the power of the enemy. Now we need to be very careful here, and I want you to listen. Listen carefully now, because kingdom authority does not need to be refused, but it certainly doesn't need to be confused, and it certainly doesn't need to be abused. Now, what is the scope of kingdom authority? Learn this: When God gave Adam authority over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, that authority has not yet been given to us. We do not live in the Garden of Eden. Now potentially we gain more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam. But our full inheritance is waiting until Jesus Christ comes again. Adam was given authority over the forces of nature. You and I are given authority over the power of the enemy. Have you got that? I hope you understand that, because, you see, the dominion over the forces of nature, that will come in the millennium.

Hebrews 2:8 is a key verse here: *"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet"*—he's talking about man. *"For in that he put all in subjection under him,"*—that is, under man—*"he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."* (Hebrews 2:8) That is, there is a potentiality that is yet to be fulfilled. There is a *not yet*. Romans 8, verse 22—the Bible says there, *"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."* (Romans 8:22) Look around. This is not the Garden of Eden. There's desert, disease, destruction, and depravity all over the globe; and if you're a child of God, you're not isolated nor insulated from these. Romans 8, verse 23, says, *"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."* (Romans 8:23)

Now the restoration of nature and the redemption of the body, that's out yonder. *"We see not yet all things put under him."* But in this day and in this age He says, "I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy." That is the scope of your kingdom authority.

Now you say, "Adrian, why are you slowing down here?" I'm just trying to help you to understand how it works. You may be Spirit-filled, but don't throw a rock in a hornets'

nest. It won't do you any good to be Spirit-filled when those hornets come out of there. That's what I'm trying to say. When our Lord says He gives you authority, He's talking about spiritual authority. He's not saying that you have authority over microbes, mosquitoes, mildew, or mudslides.

Now, why do you have to understand that? Because if the devil cannot keep you from learning this truth, he'll try to corrupt it and pervert it and have you have the idea that if you have spiritual authority, you can make it rain; or if you have spiritual authority, you can walk in a hospital room and empty it. No, you can't. We have these *joy boys* on television who've taken this truth and they have so distorted this truth that they would have you to believe that kingdom authority is the key to Fort Knox and the Fountain of Youth rolled into one. It's the gospel of cash, Cadillacs, and comfort, but it's not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "Behold, I give you authority over all of the power of the enemy." The Bible says that He has given to us—2 Peter 1, verse 3—"*According as his divine power*"—that is, His divine authority—"*hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.*" (2 Peter 1:3) Now that's where your authority is: by His divine power He has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

"I give you authority over all the power of the enemy." One day, yes, one day, the Lamb and the lion will lie down together. One day, yes, the desert will blossom as a rose. One day, yes, "*The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*" (Habakkuk 2:14) But Hebrews tells us "*not yet.*" (Hebrews 2:8) But in the meanwhile, we are not Satan's lackeys. We are not slaves of sin. Satan has no power, no authority; sin has no allurements; and temptation has no power that the child of God cannot overcome with kingdom authority. That's the scope of it. We need to understand what the scope of this authority is.

#### **IV. The Strength of Kingdom Authority**

Now, here's the last thing I want you to notice. We're talking about some principles, and then as we go on in this series we're going to flesh these out. We're going to see how it works in the church, how it works in the home, how it works in the government, and how it works in society. But the fourth thing that we're going to see is the strength of kingdom authority.

This man said, "You speak a word, and my servant will be healed." Now Jesus obviously had power to heal that you and I may not have unless God gives us that very special gift. But the point that I'm emphasizing right now is that this man, who was a centurion, was a man of strength. That is, he said, "I have those who are under me."

Go back again, if you will, and look in verse 8: "*For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say to one, Go, and he goeth.*"—would you

like some soldiers to fight for you?—“*and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*” How would you like some spiritual soldiers and some spiritual servants? All right, if you need spiritual soldiers and spiritual servants; if you need this strength, then you are going to have to enter into a thing called surrender. Do you know where strength comes from in the Christian life? Surrender.

Several years ago we had the mayor’s prayer breakfast here in Memphis, Tennessee, and some of you went to that prayer breakfast. There was a man named Cary H. Humphries who was the speaker. Now who is Cary Humphries? He is the president of Cargill North America. Well, what is Cargill? It is one of the most powerful companies in the world. At that time—and I don’t know, it still may be—it was the largest private holding company in America, perhaps in the world.

Now if you’re a businessman, you know that this man is not in the world of business a five or a six; he’s a ten. This was Cary Humphries. And Cary Humphries is a committed Christian. I heard him tell how he gave his life to Jesus Christ, and I heard him testify of the change that came into his life. And then he said this. He said, “I do not try to set a fashion statement.” He said, “I don’t emphasize style in the way that I dress. But every morning when I go out I put a white handkerchief in my pocket.” He said, “It’s up there right now.” He said, “That white handkerchief is not there primarily for style. That white handkerchief is there to say something to me.” He said, “That white handkerchief is a sign of surrender.” And he said this, and I wrote it down. He said, “In 1961 I surrendered my all to Jesus Christ. This white handkerchief is a reminder each day that I am His to command.”

Now, folks, that is a man who has all of these people working under him. I mean, that’s a man who is a mogul, a magnate in business. But he is also a man who is a humble man, who said, “I am His to command.” Have you said that to Jesus Christ? Do you mean it? Then if you do, you’re going to understand this tremendous strength. You see, there’s a difference in authority and power. Authority comes from the office; power is residual in the person.

Here’s an illustration we can all understand, then I’ll be finished. Professional football players, they have become monstrous. When I played football in college and high school, I weighed about 185 pounds, and I was one of the bigger men in the backfield. Today, they wouldn’t let me carry the water. These guys are something. I mean, here’s a fellow; he is six-foot-seven; he weighs 285 pounds; and he’s quick as a cat. And on top of that, he’s got a helmet, a face guard, and all of his armor all around him. Good night, they’re big! You could get hurt playing that game. And yet there’s another fellow out there. This guy may be 155 pounds. He has no helmet, he has no shoulder pads, he’s wearing a shirt with stripes on it, and all he’s got is a whistle. And he says to that guy, “You get off the field and go to the showers.”

Power. Authority. See the difference? The guy with the whistle, the guy with the striped shirt, he's the one with the authority. And Jesus says to us—we're the little guy—"I give you authority over all the power of the enemy"—he's the big guy. And it's time you and I told him to take a hike. It's time you and I understood the strength of spiritual authority.

## **Conclusion**

Now just knowing it is not enough. We need to learn how to pray with authority. And we're going to be talking about that soon and very soon. But let's go back to Mr. Humphries, who said, "I gave my heart to Jesus Christ in 1961." It was very real to him. Have you given your heart to Jesus Christ? I say, have you? I didn't ask you if you were a Baptist. I didn't ask if you were a member of Bellevue. I'm asking this: "Are you saved, and do you know that you're saved?"

# The Warfare of Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: September 8, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 10:17–19**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Kingdom Authority Has Been Sovereignly Established
- II. Kingdom Authority Must Be Strongly Enforced
- III. Kingdom Authority Must Be Strategically Exercised

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Luke chapter 10. The subject today is Kingdom Authority. Today we're going to show you how to exercise that authority in your warfare. We're going to be talking about the warfare of prayer and how to come against Satan and to use the authority that Jesus Christ has given to you. Because, you see, when you were born again, you were born to win, and you have become a spiritual freedom fighter. You are a commando in God's invasion army, and we need to learn this about the church of the Lord Jesus Christ: it's not a cruise ship, and it's not a showboat—it's a battleship. We're at war. We are in a grim conflict. It is a fight to the finish with no holds barred. We cannot be neutral, and we cannot call a truce. General Douglas MacArthur said, "In war there is no substitute for victory." Now I want you to see today how you and I can enter into this battle with Kingdom Authority and be absolutely certain that the victory is ours.

Luke chapter 10—I begin in verse 17: "And the seventy returned again with joy..."—Jesus sent out seventy to preach, and they—"returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." Did you get that? Even the devils, the demons, are subject unto us through thy name. "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

Now the word *power* is used twice in the King James, but the first word may be translated "authority." So there are two different words that He used in the Greek language. It may be read this way: "Behold, I give you authority over all the power of the enemy." We're talking today about Kingdom Authority, and we're talking today about taking that Kingdom Authority in the warfare that is ours, winning the victory in the name

of the Lord Jesus Christ, because 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 15 has taught us the battle is not yours but the Lord's.

Three things I want you to learn this morning about Kingdom Authority.

## **I. Kingdom Authority Has Been Sovereignly Established**

Number one: this Kingdom Authority has been sovereignly established—this Kingdom Authority has been sovereignly established. Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” Those early disciples came back and said, in verse 17, “Even the demons are subject unto us through thy name.” Now again I want to remind you of what we're talking about when we're talking about authority. Webster defines authority as, number one, the power or right to command, act, enforce obedience, or make final decisions; and then he says jurisdiction—jurisdiction—that is, to rule; and then he describes authority as this power as delegated to another, authorization—as, he has my authority to do it. Now that's what authority is in itself, and then it has been conferred or given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. All authority roots in the sovereign God. Kingdom Authority has been sovereignly established. God is the Creator, the Ruler, the King supreme in this kingdom; He rules the universes, and He is sovereign God.

Now God who is sovereign gave that authority to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When God created Adam and Eve, He told them to have dominion, but you will remember that the serpent came into the garden, deceived Adam and Eve, they sinned, they yielded their dominion to Satan, they lost their crown, and Satan became the god of this world. But Jesus Christ, the last Adam, left heaven, came to this earth, suffered, bled, and died as a man to regain what the first Adam lost. Dominion was legally lost, and dominion has been righteously regained. It was lost by a man, the first Adam; it was regained by a Man, the second Adam.

Last week, I gave you these verses. I remind you of them this morning. Hebrews 2, verse 14: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood...”—now when he's talking about children, he's talking about us. We live in flesh and blood bodies—“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself...”—now it's talking about Jesus—“he also himself took part of the same”—of the same what? Of the same flesh and blood—“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death”—the authority of death—“the devil.” Do you get it? You and I are flesh and blood. We are sons and daughters of Adam. Adam lost that authority. Jesus Christ took flesh and blood. Jesus Christ died, paid the penalty of sin, and took the dominion back from Satan, and gave it back to us. That's, again, the reason the Bible says, in 1 John chapter 3, verse 8, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

Now take your Bibles and put a bookmark there in Luke 10—we're talking about this Kingdom Authority being sovereignly established—and turn to Colossians chapter 2. Just fast-forward over to the right, and you'll come to Colossians chapter 2. Now read with me Colossians chapter 2, verses 13 through 15—incredible verses, incredible verses—Colossians 2, verses 13 through 15. I want you to see what the last Adam did for us, and how this dominion has been sovereignly established. Here's what he says: "And you, being dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him"—the word *quickened* means "being made alive"—"together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Now just keep your Bible open there now, and let's find out how this Kingdom Authority has been sovereignly established. There are three things that Jesus did for us when He came to this earth, to deliver us from bondage, and three kinds of bondage that He delivered us from. Number one: He delivered us from the bondage of spiritual death. Look in verse 13: "And you, being dead in your sins, hath he quickened"—made alive. Now if you're not a Christian, spiritually, you're dead. It's not that spiritually you're sick; spiritually, you are dead. But when Jesus Christ came to the sons and daughters of Adam, He gave to us through His death life and delivered us from the bondage of spiritual death. But not only did He deliver us from the bondage of spiritual death, He delivered us from the bondage of staggering debt—spiritual death and staggering debt.

You see, our sins are a debt that must be paid. Heaven has sued us for damages, and we are in debt because of our sin. Now what did Jesus Christ do on that cross? Jesus paid the debt. My heart was just singing when Debbie was singing that song. My heart was singing with her: "Jesus Paid It All." Jesus paid it all! Look in verse 14: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

Now I'm going to pull over and park here for a moment. I don't want you to miss this. Now listen to it. We are in bondage to spiritual death—He has given us life—but there's also a debt that needed to be paid. In Bible times, if a man was thought to have committed a crime, the accusation would be made against him if he was a lawbreaker. Then that accusation would be written out and given to a civil magistrate, and this lawbreaker would be put on trial, and if he was adjudicated guilty, they would take that bill that was against him; it was called—are you ready?—a certificate of debt—a certificate of debt. Now let's suppose that he is guilty, and he's sentenced to 10 years in prison. They would take this man and put him in prison and take that bill, that certificate

of debt, and they would nail it to his prison door. Anybody passing by could see what he had done, what the charges were, what the penalty assessed was, and it was nailed to his door. Now when he had served his 10 years—if he was sentenced for 10 years—he would be released from prison, a clerk would go get that certificate of debt, carry it back to the judge; the judge would read it, the judge would say, “Has he served his time? Has he paid the debt?” “Yes, Your Honor, he has paid the debt.” The judge would then take that certificate of debt and write across it one word: *tetelestai*, which means, “finished; paid in full; it’s done.” Then he would give to that man that certificate of debt, and that was the proof that he had that he had paid, that it was done, it was finished. Now if a man was to be crucified, they would take the certificate of debt and they would nail it to his cross. That’s the reason when Jesus was crucified, over His head was a certificate of debt. It said, “Jesus, King of the Jews.” That is, He was dying for insurrection. He claimed to be the king of the Jews, and so that certificate of debt was over His head, and the price for insurrection was death, and He was going to pay that.

Now look again in verse 14, if you will, because the Bible says that Jesus blotted “out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us”—that just simply means the certificate of debt—“which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” Can you imagine the God of the universes going up and down through all of the corridors of time for every soul that was ever born, from the sons of Adam to those who ever will be born, and collecting all of those sins, putting those sins on the Lord Jesus Christ, and nailing it to the cross? And when Jesus died, Jesus paid it all; and when He died, He bowed His head, and what did He say? “*Tetelestai!*”—paid in full, paid in full, with the crimson blood of the Son of God.

And so we now have to understand this. Now that debt was against us. Satan is still the accuser. Satan will come to you, and Satan will say to you, “You’re not good enough. You don’t deserve it. Your sins have not been forgiven.” And he will accuse you before God, and he will say to God the Father, “You claim to be so righteous. Adrian is a sinner. If You’re righteous, You will fling him into hell.” It’s that time my Advocate steps forward, my Lawyer, and He says, “Yes, Adrian has sinned, but for those sins I died, and here is the ordinance, the certificate of debt, signed in my crimson blood, paid in full.” And friend, the next time the devil comes to you to get on your case, and he will accuse you to your face, you just get your certificate of debt and just wave it in his face. Listen to me. Just wave it in his face! Jesus paid it all, and He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and He nailed it to His cross! Therefore, the Bible says, in Romans chapter 8, verse 33, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”

Now what did He do when He died for us? He delivered us from the bondage of

spiritual death. He delivered us from the bondage of staggering debt—He paid it all. And then He delivered us from the bondage of satanic dominion. Now go back again and look at this verse. Look in verse 15—oh, I love this one. This talks about what Jesus not only did for us, but what He did to Satan when He died. He ruined Satan. “And having spoiled principalities and powers”—having spoiled, spoiled principalities and powers—“he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” In what? In His death upon the cross.

Now notice what the Lord Jesus Christ did to Satan who wants to have dominion over us. First of all, He spoiled him. Know what the word *spoiled* means? You know what the word means in the Greek language? It means “to undress.” It means “to strip,” like you would strip the carcass from an animal, or like you would strip the medallions from a general, or you would strip the royal robes from someone. Here’s Satan in all of his arrogance, all of his dominion, wearing all of his medals from hell, and the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross strips Satan. He takes away all of his authority. He has been stripped, spoiled. And then the Bible says, “He made a show of him openly.” What does that mean? It means, “humiliated.” Not only is he stripped, but he’s standing there naked, as it were—no more authority, no more power, no more dominion. Say the word *stripped*. Say it. Now say the word *shamed*. *Stripped* and *shamed*. He has been made a show of openly. He doesn’t want you to understand that the king has no clothes. He is stripped; he is shamed. And now look—“triumphing over them in it.” He is subdued. Say *subdued*. Now next time you think about Satan, get those three words: *stripped*, *shamed*, *subdued*. Why? How? By the death of Jesus Christ on that cross. Not only did He pay your debt, not only did He nail it to His cross, and when it was done He said, “Paid in full,” but He took Satan’s dark kingdom, and He says to Satan, “You are stripped of your authority, you are shamed, and you are subdued. You rule in a doomed domain, and you sail a sinking ship, Satan.”

Now folks, that’s the message we need to learn. God has given to us Kingdom Authority. That’s the reason when I prayed this morning, I said, “Prayer is not our destination; it’s our point of origin.” Victory is not our destination; it’s our point of origin. We don’t pray for victory; we have the victory. We stand in victory.

## **II. Kingdom Authority Must Be Strongly Enforced**

Now here’s the second thing I want you to see. The first thing I said to you was Kingdom Authority has been sovereignly established. Okay? Got it? Sovereignly established. Secondly, Kingdom Authority must be strongly enforced—must be strongly enforced. Even though Satan has been stripped, shamed, and subdued, he will not give up anything or anybody without a fight. He does not want you to understand the

authority that you have in the Lord Jesus Christ, but Jesus said to His disciples in verse 19, in the verse that we began with, “I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions.” Now this is not for everybody. For those who reject Christ, they’re still in Satan’s dark kingdom; and for those who reject Christ and will not accept what Christ did on the cross, to them Satan is still the god of this world. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, the Bible calls him “the god of this world.” Now you and I are not a part of this world, so he’s not our god. We have been called out of that dark kingdom into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We now live in a new kingdom, the kingdom of God, and we now have Kingdom Authority, but you see, this Kingdom Authority must be enforced if we would do what our King wants us to do.

Now, why did Jesus Christ come to this earth? I want you to look, if you will, please, in Luke chapter 4. We began in Luke chapter 10; just go to Luke chapter 4. Have you ever wondered why Jesus Christ left the splendors of heaven, came down to this earth, suffered, bled, and died? You want to know why He came? Well, He’ll tell you in Luke chapter 4 and verse 18. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is in Nazareth; that’s His boyhood home. And He enters the synagogue. He takes the Bible. He opens it, the scroll. He turns to the book of Isaiah, and He reads a prophecy from the book of Isaiah that is a prophecy concerning Him, and this is what it says: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor”—underline poor—“he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted”—underline brokenhearted—“to preach deliverance to the captives”—underline captives—“and the recovering of the sight to the blind”—underline blind—“and to set at liberty them that are bruised”—underline bruised.

Now here’s why Jesus Christ came: because we were slaves of Satan, we were in bondage to his dark kingdom, and He came to set us free. And to what kind of people did He come? To those who are bankrupt. The word *poor* here doesn’t mean just poor without hardly enough; it means absolutely nothing—abject beggars. You say, “Well, that doesn’t apply to me, because I’ve got a couple of hundred thousand in the bank.” Well, Revelation 3, verse 17, says, “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Without Jesus Christ, you are bankrupt, and Jesus came to preach the gospel to the bankrupt.

And then to the brokenhearted. Do you know anybody today who is brokenhearted? Look around. We have a world that’s being baptized in salty tears. Now people may be laughing on the outside, but they’re just trying to mask the sorrow and the emptiness on the inside. That’s the reason amusement is so big today. As I’ve told you before, the word *amuse* means “not to think.” You put the alpha prefix there, the primitive *a-*. *Muse* is “to think.” *Amuse* is “not to think.” We have a generation that’s laughing its way to hell

because it cannot stand to think, because we are brokenhearted. The Bible says in the book of Job, “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” Jesus came to these men and women born of woman, because they’re brokenhearted. Bankrupt, brokenhearted, and then He says they are bound. That’s so important. They are slaves of Satan. The Bible says that they are captives—“to preach deliverance to the captives.” Put this verse down—2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 26: “That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” Your neighbor without Jesus Christ is a captive of Satan.

First John 5, verse 19, says, “And we know that the whole world lieth in wickedness.” Now what that word literally means is in the bosom of wickedness, like a child, a baby, being rocked in its mother’s arms. This world is being rocked to sleep as the demons sing the lullabies of hell. I look around at our generation today and I say, “What is wrong with people? Why don’t they wake up?” I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, they’re bankrupt, they’re brokenhearted, they’re bound, and they are blind. He’s going to open the eyes of the blind; they can’t see!

Never scold a blind man for not seeing. You say, “Well, I have 20/20 vision.” You don’t understand what He’s talking about. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” It’s not that their eyes are blind; their minds are blind. They can’t understand. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians that the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; he cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned. Don’t argue with a man because he can’t see any more than you would argue with a blind man because he can’t see the sunset. Don’t scold him for not seeing it. Nobody is ever argued into the kingdom of heaven. They are blind. They cannot see. Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see.”

And then they are bruised, according to the verse 18. They’re bruised, and the Greek word literally means “crushed.” Satan is cruel! He loves to torment. Acts chapter 10, verse 38, speaks of Jesus, “who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.”

Now think about it. Think about these people who are bankrupt. Think about these people who are brokenhearted. Think about these people who are blind. Think about these people who are bruised. Who’s going to do anything for them? Why did Jesus come? He came to these kinds of people. Now listen to me. Please listen to me. Jesus said, “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” Your neighbor, the people you work with, they’re the ones that are brokenhearted. They’re the ones that are bound. They’re the ones that are blind. They’re the ones that are bruised. They’re the ones that are bankrupt, and Jesus came for them. And then Jesus said, “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” And He said, “All authority is given unto Me. Go. Go.” We have

Kingdom Authority.

Now this Kingdom Authority must be strongly enforced. Satan is not going to roll over and play dead. You're going to have to come against him in the power of the Holy Spirit. You see, our battle today is not with Washington, not with the White House. Our battle today is not with Hollywood. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against what? Principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. We need to learn this. Do you know why we're not winning? Come up close and I'll tell you why we're not winning: we're not showing up for the battle. We're fighting the wrong places. We're fighting the wrong things. When Simon Peter came to rebuke Jesus and say to Jesus Christ, "You're not going to go to the cross; be it far from You, Lord," Jesus Christ said to Simon Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan." Now was Jesus calling Peter Satan? Of course not, because Peter was not Satan. Jesus was looking right through Satan to the real enemy, or right through Peter to the real enemy, who was Satan. Do you see that? Jesus was not fighting flesh and blood. He knew who the real enemy was, and that's what you and I have to understand today, is that we're in spiritual warfare, and this spiritual authority has been sovereignly established, but it must be strongly exercised. We have to learn to take authority.

Now, you say, "Well, now, wait a minute, Pastor. I don't understand. You're confusing me. On the one hand, you say that Satan has been stripped, shamed, and subdued, and then, on the other hand, you say that we have got to strongly enforce this Kingdom Authority. If it's done, then why do we need to strongly enforce it?" I'm glad you asked that question. Now I want to try and answer that question for you. You see, even though Satan's defeat is absolute, it must be appropriated. Now that's a key sentence. Even though Satan's defeat is absolute, it must be appropriated.

Let me ask you a question: Was Jesus' death for sin absolute? Of course it was. When He died on the cross, the Bible says, in 2 John, "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Jesus died for the whole world. Is the whole world saved? Of course not! Was His death absolute? It was, but it's only good to those who appropriate it. Isn't that true? If you don't appropriate it, it won't do you any good. The Bible says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed." In other words, a man doesn't go to hell because of his sins; those sins have been paid for. He goes to hell because he does not appropriate what has already been done. Got that? Now it's the same thing about Holy Spirit power. When the Day of Pentecost came, God poured out the Holy Spirit. You and I don't need to pray for another Holy Spirit; we don't need to pray for another Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has come. Is every Christian therefore Spirit-filled? No! Even though the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was absolute, it must be

appropriated; and just as the death of Jesus Christ and just as the power of the Holy Spirit are both absolute and must be appropriated, Satan's defeat is absolute, but you must appropriate it. You understand what I'm talking about? You must say, "I'm going to take my authority in the Lord Jesus. I appropriate it. I stand on it. And I come against Satan's dark kingdom."

### **III. Kingdom Authority Must Be Strategically Exercised**

Now I must leave that point because time is gone, and let me just come to the last and the final thing. This Kingdom Authority, sovereignly established, must be strongly—strongly—put forth. Thirdly, it must be strategically exercised. It must be strategically exercised. Don't just sally forth against the devil if your heart is not right with God. There must be the right people. I'm talking about people whose hearts are clean. I've told you before that you will never—listen—you will never be over until first of all you're under; and if you even as a child of God dare to come against Satan with the heart of a rebel, you're going to be in serious trouble.

I was reading early this morning from Acts chapter 19 about seven men. They were sons of a man named Sceva. They were exorcists; that is, they claimed to be able to cast out demons. And there was a demon-possessed man, and the Bible says these seven sons of Sceva came to this man and they said, "We adjure you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches to come out of him." The Bible says that man turned on them, stripped all the clothes off of them, began to beat on them, and they fled, wounded and naked. One demon-possessed man put seven men to flight. They were trying to take authority over the devil, but what was wrong with them? They didn't know Jesus Christ personally; they had secondhand religion. "In the name of Jesus," they said, "whom Paul preaches." Friend, I want to tell you something. It had better be in the name of Jesus that you know. And don't you come against the devil and say, "You remember what Adrian said up there, devil? I'm coming against you in the name of Jesus whom Adrian preaches." That won't work. That won't work. It is in the name of Jesus whom I know. Demons are subject to us in Thy name.

There has to be the right person, and then you have to come from the right position. What is your position? Remember what we told you about Ephesians 2, verse 6—that we're seated with Jesus in the heavenlies? Let me tell you a different way to pray. Stop praying from earth to heaven, and start praying from heaven to earth. You're seated with Jesus in the heavenlies. You are enthroned with the Lord Jesus Christ. When He died, you died. When He rose, you rose. When He ascended, you ascended. When He is seated at the right hand of God, you are in Him, seated with Him, and now you have throne rights and Kingdom Authority. And now, rather than praying to heaven, you just

pray from heaven. And Jesus says, in Matthew chapter 18, “I say unto you that whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” That doesn’t mean that heaven seconds the motion. The Greek language says, whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven, but what you and I need to do is to exercise our Kingdom Authority.

## **Conclusion**

Time is gone. Let me tell you this, and then we’re going to pray. There was a man who was born in France. That man born in France moved to England, and he became a citizen of the British Empire. Now Britain, England, defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. When that man was a citizen of France, for him Waterloo was a defeat. Napoleon was a Frenchman, the war was lost, and that man as a citizen of France was a loser. But now when he left France and became a citizen of England, for him Waterloo was no longer a defeat; for him it’s now a victory.

You without Jesus are in Satan’s dark kingdom, and Calvary for you is a defeat, but when you come into the kingdom of His dear Son, it is for you now a victory. Understand that? We have Kingdom Authority. He has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. Folks, are you understanding this? Nod your head. Just do you understand a little bit of it? Do you understand what I’m saying to you? Our enemy has been stripped, shamed, and subdued, and Jesus said, “I give you authority over all the power of the enemy.” Don’t you think it’s about time we started using it?

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Lord, seal the message to our hearts. In Jesus’ holy name.

# The Warfare of Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 8, 1996

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 10:17–19

*“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”*

LUKE 10:19

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and be finding Luke chapter 10—a very key passage, and it deals with the victory that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ and some principles of spiritual warfare. Now the word warfare is an important word, for whether you realize it or not, we’re in a battle. We are in a war, a fight to the finish, against a sinister foe, no holds barred. We cannot be neutral, and we cannot call for a truce. General Douglas MacArthur said, and rightly said, “In war, there is no substitute for victory.” And the victory is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ, as we’re going to see.

Because of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, and because of our birth into the kingdom, we have now kingdom authority. And when we were born again, we were born to win. I hope you will learn that today. I pray God that the Holy Spirit will emblazon that upon your heart, as we read there in the book of Chronicles, “The battle is not yours; it is the Lord’s.” (2 Chronicles 32:8)

Now, let’s see what God says here in Luke chapter 10 and verse 17. Now, let me preface this by saying that Jesus commissioned seventy to go out and preach. He gave them authority. And when they came back with great joy, here’s what they said: *“And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us through thy name.”* Did you get it? Listen to it: *“The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto*

*them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” (Luke 10:17–19)*

Now the word power is used twice there in the King James Version. But in the Greek there are two different words for power. The first word means “authority,” and it may be translated, “Behold, I give you authority over all the power of the enemy.” We’re in a study entitled “Kingdom Authority.” There are three things today I want to put on your heart as we talk about our spiritual warfare over Satan. And that warfare, by the way, is prayer. We’re going to show you that in a moment, but three things, and I hope you’ll get them; and if I meet you tonight and ask you about them, I hope you’ll be able to tell me what they are.

## **I. Kingdom Authority Has Been Sovereignly Established**

First of all now, get this: Kingdom authority has been sovereignly established. You got that? Write it down. Kingdom authority has been sovereignly established. Now, what do we mean by authority? Well, Webster says authority is “the power or the right to command, to act, to enforce obedience, or to make final decisions.” And then he says, “This power, as delegated to another; authorization; as, ‘He has my authority to do it.’” Now that’s what these seventy understood: “Lord, the demons are subject to us through thy name.” In the name of Jesus, we have the victory. You see, our authority comes from Him. It has been sovereignly established.

I told you last week how Adam and Eve were created, placed in the Garden of Eden, and given dominion—given dominion over all of the earth. “Let them have dominion over the works of my hands,” God said. (Genesis 1:26) But Adam and Eve sinned. They yielded their dominion to Satan. They lost the crown. They became slaves of Satan. And all of the children of Adam and Eve are sons and daughters of slaves, and slaves themselves. Adam lost his dominion. The Lord Jesus, the second Adam, the last Adam, came to this earth as a man, took flesh and blood, and bought back Adam’s lost estate. Remember what we told you? This dominion was legally lost. It must be righteously regained.

God owes the devil nothing. But God will be true to His own legality, His own sense of righteousness and justice and truth. And so God did not just simply snatch that authority back from Satan, kill the devil, and give it to Adam. It was lost by a man, and it was regained by a man. It was lost by the first Adam; it was regained by the second Adam, the Lord Jesus. And so the Bible says, “*In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*” (1 Corinthians 15:22) That dominion has been bought back.

Now there are many verses that teach this. But this morning we’re going to look at one that’s a hallelujah verse. Just put your bookmark there, if you will, in Luke chapter

10 and turn with me to Colossians chapter 2. And it's very important that you turn to this passage this morning, because I want you to keep it right there in your hand and look at it. We're going to begin in Colossians 2, verse 13. He's going to give your spiritual biography right here. Now this is talking about you. It says, *"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross..."*—underscore that—*"nailing it to his cross, and, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."* (Colossians 2:13–15)

Now, folks, in three verses there you've got some spiritual dynamite. And I want you to pay attention and find out how this kingdom authority has been sovereignly established. I want you to see how Jesus on the cross brought Satan's kingdom crashing down. I want you to see what the Lord Jesus Christ did. You see, you and I, being slaves, were in bondage. But Jesus came to set the captives free.

#### **A. Jesus Set Us Free from Our Spiritual Death**

First of all, we were in bondage to spiritual death. Look in verse 13: *"And you, being dead in your sins...hath he made alive."* (Colossians 2:13) Now, folks, let me tell you how bad off we were. We were not just sick in our sins; we were dead. You don't have to wait till your heart stops beating for you to be dead. The Bible says, *"She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."* (1 Timothy 5:6) Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10) Your heart is already beating. A man, a woman, a boy, or girl without Jesus Christ, is dead, right? All right, in Adam all die; in Christ, all are made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22) So, the very first thing Jesus came to set us free from was spiritual death.

#### **B. Jesus Set Us Free from Our Staggering Debt**

But now, watch this: Not only spiritual death, but spiritual debt. We are in debt because of our sins. Heaven has sued us for damages. We are guilty before God, and in debt, because of our sin. But now, notice verse 14. Jesus was *"blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."* (Colossians 2:14)

Now, are you ready for a blessing? Listen to me. In olden times, in Bible times, when a man was accused of a crime, a handwriting of ordinance would be written against him. His indictment would be written down, the crime that he had committed, or they thought he had committed. And then this handwriting of ordinance was delivered to the judge, and there would be a trial. And if he were adjudicated guilty, then they would write on this description of his crime the penalty, the debt that was due.

Now, let's suppose that he was to spend ten years in prison. And so they would write

on there: He has done thus and thus and thus; and here is the penalty; here is the debt that is due. And it is written on this certificate of debt, this handwriting of ordinance. Then they would put that man in the prison. And then they would nail to the prison door that certificate of debt. And it would tell what he had done, what the judge had sentenced him to, and what he must pay.

Now once he had fulfilled his time in jail, once he had paid his debt to society and to the king, then they would release him from jail, they would take that handwritten bill, and a clerk would take it back to the judge. The judge would say, “Has he paid in full? Has he paid to the very last day? Has his debt been satisfied against the crown?” “Yes, Your Honor, he has paid in full.” The judge, or the king, whichever the case might be, would take that certificate of debt and write across it one word. As a matter of fact, in ancient documents we find this word written on certificates of debt. Even in the Dead Sea Scrolls they found it written. It is the same word that Jesus uttered from the cross. It is the word *tetalestai*, which literally means “paid in full.” He would take his pen, take that certificate of debt that had been nailed to the prison door, write across it “*tetalestai*”—that is, “it is paid,” “it is finished,” and give it to him. Now he walks out of that courtroom having had his debt paid. There’s nothing again that the law can bring up against him. That is gone. It is buried. It is finished. It is paid in full.

Now I want you to imagine Almighty God going through all of the record of all mankind, from Adam right up to the last person who will ever be born, and taking all of the crimes, all of the sins, all of the lies, all of the hate, all of the pride, all of the rape, all of the murder, all of the blasphemy, all of every sin, writing it down on a certificate of debt for mankind—my sin, your sin, our sin—and what did He do with it? He said we are guilty. But then, what did He do? He took it and nailed it to the cross.

If a man was guilty of a capital crime and he was going to die, they did not put the certificate of debt on the cell door; they put it on the cross. Remember when Jesus Christ was crucified, what did they do? They put an accusation over His head: King of the Jews. What was He guilty of? What was the capital crime? Insurrection. He claimed to be a king. They said, “He’s the King of the Jews. That’s why He’s dying.” But, friend, Paul says that He took our certificate of debt. He took the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. He took it out of the way and He nailed it to His cross. And when He died, He bowed His head—and what did He say? “*Tetalestai*”—“paid in full.” Signed with the crimson blood of the very Son of God. Paid! Paid in full!

Now the devil is the accuser of the brethren, and Satan will accuse you to God. And he’ll say, “You see that man, Adrian Rogers? He claims to be a Baptist preacher. But he’s a sinner. He lost his temper the other day. If you are a righteous God, you ought to fling him into hell.” But then my Attorney appears. His name is Jesus. And He says, “Now, wait just a minute, Father. Here’s his certificate of debt. It is paid in full.” And,

*“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.”* (Psalm 32:2) Paid in full!

Then if he doesn't do any good with God the Father, he'll come to me, and he'll say, "You're no good. You don't deserve to live. You think you're so saved. You think that you're a child of God. What about all of those bad things you've done? What about those thoughts? What about those failures?" And I just take my certificate of debt and wave it in his face. That's the reason the Apostle Paul said in Romans 8, *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.”* (Romans 8:33) You see, listen. Not only have we been brought out of bondage from our spiritual death—we have been made alive with the Lord Jesus—but also from our staggering debt.

### C. **Jesus Set Us Free from Satanic Dominion**

But now, wait a moment. There's a third thing that His death did: Not only our spiritual death; not only our staggering debt; but also satanic dominion—we've been set free from that. Now, look in verse 15—Colossians 2, verse 15: *“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”* (Colossians 2:15) Now when he says *“principalities and powers,”* what is he talking about? He's talking about Satan's dark kingdom. Remember Ephesians chapter 6? *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...and spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12) But what did Jesus do when He died on that cross? He ruined Satan.

Now, look, first of all, at the word spoiled. Do you see it? *“And having spoiled principalities and powers...”* That word spoiled—ekduo—it literally means “to strip.” Have you ever seen maybe a film where a person, an army officer, is being disgraced? Maybe he's sinned against the state, and he has all of these medals on him, and he comes up there, and his superior officer just reaches out to those medals and that insignia and—rip!—strips it from him. Have you ever seen something like that? That's exactly what this word has the idea of: stripping. It actually meant to take the hide from an animal. He, Satan, has been stripped.

And then the Bible says, *“He made a show of them openly.”* Here he is. He is now stripped of all of his royal regalia. He had dominion. He calls himself “the god of this world.” He says, “All of the kingdoms of this world have been given unto me.” But when Jesus died on the cross, He stripped him of that. And then He made a show of him openly. Look at that verse: *“He made a show of them openly.”* That is, he's not only stripped, but he's shamed. He's made a show of. He's made a laughingstock. He is to be ridiculed. Look at him! Look at him! The king has no clothes. He's been stripped. He's been shamed.

And then it says, *“triumphing over them in it.”* In what? In His death on the cross. He has been subdued. Say, “stripped.” Say, “shamed.” Say, “subdued.” That's Satan.

That's your enemy. Stripped! Shamed! Subdued! How? By mighty Calvary. The writer of Hebrews says of Jesus *"that through death he would destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."* (Hebrews 2:14) That's what the second Adam did to undo what the first Adam did. Have you got that? Do you understand it? This authority has been sovereignly established.

Now the devil doesn't want you to learn that. He doesn't want you to learn that the king has no clothes. He does not want you to know that he's been stripped, shamed, and subdued, okay? But you know it now, don't you? Say amen. Say, "I know it. I know it. I know it!" Don't you let him intimidate you anymore.

## **II. Kingdom Authority Must Be Strongly Enforced**

Now, here's the second thing: This authority that has been sovereignly established, this same authority must be strongly enforced. Now you say, "Now, wait a minute, Adrian. If it has been so sovereignly established, why does it need to be strongly enforced?" Because Satan is an impostor and he does not give up anybody or anything without a fight. And his fight is deception. He always tries to pull the veil of darkness over his nefarious kingdom. He does not want you to understand what has happened to him. Many people don't realize this. Many people think that Satan still has power. He only has power to those who allow him to have that power.

"Well," you say, "Pastor, I don't understand. If he has been defeated, why, then, must I enforce my authority over him?" Because you must appropriate what God has already done. We do this in many areas. For example, Jesus died for everybody. First John chapter 2 says this of the Lord Jesus: *"He is the propitiation for our sins."* Now that's a big, double-jointed word. But it literally means He is the satisfaction for our sin. *"He is the propitiation for our sins."* Jesus paid it all. *"He is the propitiation for our sins:"*—and then John says—*"and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2:2)

When Jesus died, He died for the world. But is all the world saved? No. Why? Because what is absolute, His death, must be appropriated by faith, right? The fact that Jesus died for you and paid your sin debt will do you no good unless you believe on Him. *"He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."* (John 3:18) You no longer need to go to hell because of your lying, or stealing, or pride, or envy, or lust. That has been paid for! But you must appropriate what has been paid for. Got it? So it was absolute, but it must be appropriated.

Let's do something else. Let's think about spiritual power. When the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, God poured out His Holy Spirit to the infant church. And we don't need to pray for another Pentecost. We don't need to pray, "Holy Spirit, come."

The Holy Spirit has come. We need to quit asking God to do what He has already done. It would be like asking Jesus to die for our sins. The Holy Spirit has come. And God has poured out incredible, dynamic power. But let me ask you a question: Is every Christian Spirit-filled? Does every Christian have the power of the Holy Spirit? No. Why? Because they have not appropriated that which is already absolute. You see, it is there, but it must be appropriated.

Now, let's talk about your dominion over Satan. Has Satan's back been broken? Yes. Has his kingdom been ruined? Yes. Do you have authority? Yes. But you must appropriate and enforce that authority. Satan is not going to give up these who are in his dark kingdom. You see, Satan is holding people captive.

### **A. The Condition of the Captives**

Turn back, if you will, with me for just a moment to Luke chapter 4. I want to show you the condition of these who are captives of Satan. This is an amazing passage of Scripture here—Luke chapter 4. The Lord Jesus is at His hometown in Nazareth. It's time for the sermon, and Jesus steps up to give the sermon now, and He takes for a text Isaiah chapter 61. And this is what Jesus says, because the Old Testament prophesied of the Lord Jesus. I'll read verse 17 first: *"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet, Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor."* (Luke 4:17–18)

#### **1. He Came for the Bankrupt**

These are those who are bankrupt, the poor. Now He's not talking only about those who are financially poor. It includes that, but He's talking here spiritually. Now you may be a multi-millionaire today, but without Jesus, you're bankrupt. That church in the book of the Revelation, Laodicea, the Lord said to that church, *"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."* (Revelation 3:17) You may go home today in a fine automobile, but without Jesus you are a pauper, and you need the Lord. So, put down the word: He came for the bankrupt.

#### **2. He Came for the Brokenhearted**

But now, notice also: *"He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted."* Oh, listen. Jesus came to those who are filled with sorrow. Your neighbor, those people that you work with, they are brokenhearted. The Bible says, *"Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble."* (Job 14:1) And without Jesus it's only going to get worse. What do they have to look forward to? One by one, their loved ones will be taken from them. One by one, they'll go down into the grave. Day by day, their body will get weaker and sicker, and all they have to look

forward to is a hole in the ground. And there's no rhyme, nor reason, nor sense to anything.

### **3. He Came for the Bound**

Jesus came to those people: the bankrupt, the brokenhearted; and then, look: *"to preach deliverance to the captives."* The bound—these are people who have been taken captive by Satan. Satan has moved in and made this world a vast concentration camp, and they are Satan's captives. They may not even realize it, but they are bound by Satan. And the Bible says, *"The whole world lieth in the bosom of the wicked one."* (1 John 5:19) Just like a child asleep in its mother's arms, this world is listening to the lullaby of hell, as demons sing that anthem. And we wonder why they don't wake up. They've been chloroformed by the spirit of this age, and they've been taken captive.

### **4. He Came for the Blind**

*"And recovering of the sight to the blind."* Put down the word blind. These are people who cannot see. Second Corinthians 4:4 says, *"The god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not."* (2 Corinthians 4:4) It's not that you don't have 20/20 sight. You can't see spiritual things. Never argue with a man for not understanding the Bible. Nobody is ever argued into the kingdom of heaven. When he says, "I just don't see it," he's not lying. He doesn't see it. Jesus said, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see."* (John 3:3) *"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* (1 Corinthians 2:14) To scold a man for not seeing, that would be like scolding a blind man for not seeing a sunset. Listen. They are blind until Jesus opens their eyes.

### **5. He Came for the Bruised**

And then, look: *"To set at liberty them that are bruised."* (Luke 4:18) Satan is cruel! He takes joy in your suffering and in your pain. Why does he do that? Why is Satan the bruiser? Satan knows that he cannot get at God. Satan's war is with God, but Satan knows if he can hurt someone that God loves, he has hurt God anyway. And so therefore you have become a pawn in this war. And just look at this litany of problems. Those who are bankrupt, those who are brokenhearted, those who are bound, those who are blind, those who are bruised—these are the ones who are in Satan's dark kingdom.

Now, what is our responsibility? Why did Jesus come? This verse says that the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him, because God sent Him to do this. Now, what did Jesus say to us? Listen to me. Jesus said, *"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."* (John 20:21) These who are bankrupt, these who are brokenhearted, these who are bound, these who are blind, these who are bruised—God has sent us to the rescue. It is our job, in the authority that has been given to us, to set the captives free. That's the reason

we have this Great Commission; it deals with authority: *“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”* (John 20:21)

Our warfare is not with flesh and blood. We need to understand that our warfare is with Satan. Do you understand that? Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, says, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12) When Simon Peter rebuked the Lord Jesus and said to the Lord Jesus concerning the cross, “No, Lord, be it far from you; you’ll not die on that cross,” Jesus Christ said to Simon Peter, *“Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offense unto me.”* (Matthew 16:23) Now, was Jesus calling Simon Peter “Satan”? Of course not! Jesus knew better than that. But Jesus looked beyond Simon Peter and saw where the battle was.

Now, do you know what the devil loves to do? The devil loves to get us fighting with flesh and blood. Now, listen. Our problem is not in Hollywood, nor in the White House; we’re at war with Satan. It’s about time we woke up. Let me tell you something, folks: I don’t know how the next election is going to come out, but I’m going to tell you one thing: George Bush didn’t bring revival, and Bill Clinton can’t stop it. I want you to listen to me. Our warfare is not with some politician; our warfare is with Satan himself. We are not wrestling with flesh and blood. And the reason that we’re losing the fight is we’re not showing up for it. And Jesus said, *“Behold, I give you [authority] over all the power of the enemy.”* (Luke 10:19) Now it must be strongly enforced. It is sovereignly established, but it must be strongly enforced. You have to take the power of attorney and move in.

There was a woman in Missouri, I believe. I read about her. She had allowed a man who was not her husband to come into her apartment and live there. She thought it would be a good arrangement, but after a while she realized that she had made a tragic mistake. And she told that man, “You’re going to have to leave.” He said, “I’m not leaving.” She said, “Please leave.” He said, “I’m not going to leave.” She said, “I don’t want you here anymore.” He said, “I’m not going to go. You invited me here. I’m going to stay.” She didn’t know what to do. She went to a court and got an injunction against him and brought it there and said, “You see this? You’ve got to go. I’ve got authority now, and you’ve got to go.” And he moved out.

Now Satan is that same way. You can say, “Satan, won’t you leave me alone? Please leave me alone. Don’t bother me anymore.” What you need to do, my friend, is take the authority of heaven and say, “Satan, in the name of Jesus, I resist you. I rebuke you. You have no right here. You are trespassing on my Father’s property. And in the name of Jesus, be gone.” You say, “Well, you’re talking to the devil. Isn’t that like praying to the devil?” You’re not praying to a cat when you say, “Scat.” I’m telling you, my friend, Jesus said, *“I give you [authority] over all the power of the enemy.”* It has

been sovereignly established. It must be strongly, firmly, enforced.

### **III. Kingdom Authority Must Be Strategically Exercised**

Now here's the third and final thing: This authority that our Lord has given us to set the captives free must be strategically exercised. "Now, Pastor, what do you mean that it must be strategically exercised?"

#### **A. There Must Be the Right Person**

Well, number one: The person who does it must be right. Don't you sally forth against Satan if there's any unconfessed sin in your life or a spirit of rebellion. You will never be over until you learn to be under. Only when you're under authority can you live with authority. You're going to get yourself in a lot of trouble if you try to fight spiritual battles with a dirty, wicked heart or a rebellious spirit. There must be the right person.

#### **B. There Must Be the Right Position**

Number two—and this is very important: There must be the right position. Now you must understand where you are as a Christian, and you speak from that position—because what is our position? Ephesians 2, verse 6, says that God has "*raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*" (Ephesians 2:6) He has "*raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*"—"in the *heavenlies.*" And, folks, listen. When Jesus died, we died with Him. His death had our name on it. When Jesus arose, we rose with Him. When Jesus ascended, we ascended with Him. When Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, we are in Him, and He is in us. We are sitting together with Jesus in the *heavenlies*. You say, "I thought I was here in Bellevue Baptist Church." Physically, you are; but spiritually, you're seated with Christ.

Now, listen. You know our problem many times? We're praying in the wrong direction. We are praying from earth to heaven. We need to start praying from heaven to earth. Are you listening? I mean, from our position in the Lord Jesus Christ: from heaven to earth! We are seated with the Lord Jesus, and now we need to turn our prayers downward, because these things are beneath our feet. And Jesus said, "Whatever you will bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19) Now it doesn't mean that God seconds the motion. It means in the Greek language, "Whatever you bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven." It is done. And now we need to exercise kingdom authority.

## C. There Must Be the Right Power

The right person. The right position. And the right power.

### 1. The Power Is in Calvary

Where is the power? The power is in Calvary. The Bible speaks of Satan in Revelation chapter 12 and it says concerning Satan, *“And they”—the saints—“overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”* (Revelation 12:11) Where is the power? The power is in Calvary. The power is in the blood. *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”* Can you imagine a lamb overcoming a dragon? In this same chapter Satan is described as a great red dragon. But they overcame him by the blood of a little lamb. You, with the authority that has been given to you, can take the blood of Jesus Christ and overcome Satan every time. Say, “Calvary.”

### 2. The Power Is in Confession

Now, here’s the second thing: *“the word of their testimony.”* (Revelation 12:11) What does that mean? What is the word of your testimony? The word of your testimony is the Word of God actualized in your life. That’s the word of your testimony: what God has done for you. Do you have a testimony? Do you believe the Bible? Well, that’s the second step, and that’s confession. By the word of your testimony: give the devil your testimony. Say, “I belong to Jesus Christ. My certificate of debt is paid in full. Your back is broken. God has given me authority over you. And I don’t have to take it. That’s my testimony, Satan.”

### 3. The Power Is in Commitment

Then, the third thing is commitment. *“They loved not their lives unto the death.”* Don’t you let the devil intimidate you anymore. What that verse literally means is, “I’ll serve Jesus, if I die for doing it.” It doesn’t mean, “I’ll keep loving Him till I die.” It means, “I’ll serve Him, if I get killed for doing it.” That’s what it means. Say, “Calvary.” Say, “confession.” Say, “commitment.”

## Conclusion

Now, let’s think of Satan. Say, “stripped, shamed, subdued.” “Calvary, confession, commitment.” Oh, my friend, Jesus said, *“I give you [authority] over all the power of the enemy.”* (Luke 10:19) It’s time we discovered it and put it to work, amen?

# The Evil Empire

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: January 3, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 10:17–20**

*“And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”*

LUKE 10:18

## Outline

Introduction

I. Satan’s Personality

II. Satan’s Position

III. Satan’s Power

IV. Satan’s Purpose

V. Satan’s Plan

Conclusion

## Introduction

Find please Luke chapter 10 and in just a moment I want to begin reading in verse 17. But, before I do when you find it look up here, Luke chapter 10, and verse 17. Luke 10, verse 17. I believe that Ronald Reagan is a great man and some time ago he was speaking of the Soviets. And, he called them by this phrase, “An evil empire,” an evil empire. And, I want to say that I believe that Communism is unspeakably evil, I really believe that with all of my heart. I believe that *evil* is a good word to describe a system that denies categorically Almighty God. And, I believe when we see the murderous ways of Communism, when we see their malevolent plans for domination, indeed we can think of an empire of evil. But, it is not the Soviet people that we’re opposed to, they are people like we are, and they are objects of God’s love. And, there is an empire of evil that is behind that evil empire and behind the wickedness and the sin in the United States also.

Now, listen to God’s Word, Luke chapter 10, verse 17. Jesus had sent seventy out to preach and the Bible says in verse 17: *“And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on*

*serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:17–20).*

Now, the message today is a very serious and a very somber message on the threshold of a brand new year. It is a call to alarm and a call to arms. I want to remind you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, we're not in a religious playground, we're in a battlefield, and we are in a grim conflict with a deadly enemy. And, in any warfare it is necessary to know the enemy.

We are up against the mobilized, organized, demonized forces of Hell. And, it has always been the devil's method to pull the veil of darkness over his dark kingdom and to wear a mask of disguise. God's Word is the only book that can rip aside that veil, pull off that mask, and expose the evil empire, that dark kingdom of Satan. Now, there are several things I want us to learn about the enemy today, to be forewarned is to be armed indeed and we're going to have a topical study of the Word of God. There are many Scriptures, you may want to get out a pen and some paper and jot these Scriptures down and refer to them in your quiet time to get them down deep in your heart.

## **I. Satan's Personality**

I want us to think about the king of this evil empire, the devil himself. And, the very first thing I want you to think about is his personality. Now, when I say his personality, I don't mean his person, but I mean that he is a person. He's not just a figure of speech, he's not a myth, he's not a metaphor, and he is a real personage.

The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 8: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).* Now, suppose you heard on the evening news that somehow a ravenous lion in escaped your neighborhood. A trainer, a circus, or something, and a door is left open and a ravenous lion who has not been fed for many days is loose in your neighborhood. And, they said, “He's in the immediate vicinity.” And, they call your street and they say, “He's in this neighborhood.” Now, right away you're going turn up the news a little, but say, “Hey mother, get quiet, listen to this, there is a lion loose in our neighborhood and he hadn't been fed for days.”

Now, I want to ask you a question. When you go to carry out the garbage are you going to be looking around? Nod your head. I mean, when you go to your car you, are you going to say, “Is he in the garage?” There's a lion loose, wouldn't you be careful? Peter says, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).*

You have an enemy. He's real. The Bible calls him, “Your adversary,” “Your

adversary” (1 Peter 5:8). Why is he your adversary? His real war is with God, but wicked people have always known if you can’t harm someone, harm someone that someone loves, and you’ve harmed someone anyway. If the devil cannot get directly with God, he can get to God by getting to you. He is the bitterest enemy of God and God’s people. He is called *the adversary*.

When we had the singing tree brother Jim had some beautiful banners made. And, on those banners were the name of God, which are truly the names of the Lord Jesus. And, as I saw those banners come my heart began to thump and beat. I got so excited I just wanted to stand up and shout, “Hoorah for Jesus” as I thought about His names because His name stands for His personality, His character, and His power. But, have you ever thought about the names for the devil? And, have you ever thought about what they stand for and what they tell us about the devil? His names indicate his personage, his personality. He is called in the Bible, “...*the deceiver...*” (Job 12:16). Another name is *liar*, another is *murderer*, another is *accuser*, another is *tempter*, another is *prince*, another name is *destroyer*, and another name is *the evil one*.

He’s not a figment of our imagination, he’s not some figure of speech, and he is a person—personal, aggressive, intelligent, cunning, destructive—his clever rules are to make men believe that he does not exist. Some sort of a mythological character, someone like Santa Claus, and so we think of him as an impish little fellow, sort of someone to be laughed at. Amazed so, we named football teams *Devils* and *Demons*. We name automobiles *Demons*, we name cakes *Devil’s Food cake*. We laugh at it. We have the idea that he’s sort of a little fellow dressed up in red underwear with cure little horns, and a forked tail, and a pitchfork trying to catch somebody bending over. It’s all kind of funny to us and so we say, “Do you believe in the devil?” and, that’s what we kind of conjure up in our mind. We say, “No, I don’t believe in that.”

The devil wants us not to believe in him. So, as I’ve said he’s pulled the veil of darkness over his nefarious kingdom. But, if you finally do admit that he does exist, then he wants you to believe that he is in Hell, that somehow he’s down there in Hell, and we don’t have anything to do with him. But, friend, he’s not in Hell, he’s in Memphis. You need to understand this, he is present, he is an adversary, he’s going about “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12 puts it plainly. The Apostle Paul says, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Ephesians 6:12). No Christian is immune. Not the Republicans, not the Democrats, not the I.R.S., not your wife, not your husband, not your neighbor, they’re all flesh and blood. We’re not fighting flesh and blood. Oh, sometimes, these do the work of him. It is not to say that sometimes we do not have to oppose evil people, but they are not the

power behind the throne. The devil may have a thousand heads, but he has one heart and our real battle is with the devil himself. He is a person.

## II. Satan's Position

I want you to think not only of his personality, but I want you to think secondly with me about his position. What kind of a position does he occupy? You may be surprised to know that he has a grand high and exalted position. The Bible calls him a *prince*.

As a matter of fact, the Bible calls him *the God of this age*. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12 I refer to you again: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities..." (Ephesians 6:12). Do you know what principalities are? They're kingdoms, empires, against powers—that is, authorities—against the rulers of the darkness of this world. Literally, that is world rulers of darkness. There is an evil empire. There is a worldwide empire of evil and it is not merely in the Soviet Union. It is in the United States, it is in Canada, it is in Japan, it is in Great Britain, it is a worldwide empire. The devil is called in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 2: "...*the prince of the power of the air...*" (Ephesians 2:2). He is a prince, he moves the nations of this world like men on a chessboard.

A very interesting passage of Scripture is Revelation chapter 16 and verse 13. The Apostle John had a revelation there on the island of Patmos and he said, "*And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet*"—And, then he described who these beings are, these frog like beings. He says in a very poignant verse—"*For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth*"—listen to this—"*unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world*"—not just behind the iron curtain now, the whole world—"*the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty*" (Revelation 16:13–14).

What is that battle? It is the battle of Armageddon. Satan's burning unholy ambition has always been to overthrow God and we're moving toward a battle and Satan is moving. The nations of this world step-by-step, move-by-move, step-by-step, move by move to Armageddon. There is a power of the air, kingdoms, dark empires that are being moved by Satan.

Now, it went onto say, "The study claims that the Soviet Union is making significant progress in finding military applications of precognition, out of the body experiences, extra-sensory perception, and psychokinesis. Now, psychokinesis is the ability to move without touching them. Do you know what that says? It says that, "The Soviets who don't believe in God are dabbling in the occult." It says that, "They are studying parapsychology, E.S.P., precognition." That is, prophecy, able to know things ahead of time.

All of this dark occult world, they're studying that. And, if that's not enough, the U.S.

Army says, “Look what they’re studying. Hey, we don’t want them to get ahead of us, and so we’re studying the same thing.” When I read that I thought, “Oh, these are the spirits of demons leading the kings of this world to the battle.” The Bible calls him in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and verse 4: “...*the god of this world...*” (2 Corinthians 4:4). People say, “God is in His Heaven and all is right with His world.” God is in His Heaven all right, but we’re in a mess down here, folks. And, the god of this age, the god of this world is the devil.

### III. Satan’s Power

Now, I’ve talked to you some about his personage, he is a person. I’ve talked to you about his position, he is a prince, he is a ruler, and he is a god, little *g*. 2 Corinthians 4:4: “the God of this world.” The Bible says in 1 John, the whole world lieth in the wicked zone, that is, is in the lap of the devil, just being rocked in the lap and in the arms of Satan himself. I want you to think about a third thing. I want you to think with me about his power. Well, if he’s a king, if he rules over an evil empire, how much power does he have? May I tell you that it is sheer folly, listen, and sheer folly to underestimate the power of the devil? Jesus, when he taught us to pray, he taught us to pray every single day, “...*deliver us from evil...*”—Every day. Do you pray that? —“...*lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...*” (Matthew 6:13). That literally says, “Deliver us from the evil one.” You have an adversary like a roaring lion and he has power.

Acts 26, verse 18 tells us that the gospel, “*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*”—underscore that phrase—“the power of Satan” (Acts 26:18). Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12: “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers” powers, authorities (Ephesians 6:18).

2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9 speaks of the coming anti-Christ, listen to it. “*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Can you imagine the Apostle Paul writing a phrase like that to describe the devil, “all power...and lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9)? Now, he’s doesn’t mean that he’s omnipotent, but he means that he has all kinds of power. He is a supernatural person, he has supernatural power, and he is the supreme dictator in the evil empire.

Martin Luther the father of the protestant reformation knew this. He wrote a great song, “A mighty fortress is our God.” And, what strength we gain when we sing that song, but there’s a dark line in that song, it says for still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe, his craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal. There is no power on earth equal to the power of Satan. There’s power in Heaven and Jesus said I have given you authority overall the power of the enemy but I

am telling you friend, that we must have God's power or we'll go down because Satan is powerful.

#### **IV. Satan's Purpose**

Now, let me mention not only his personality and these other things, but let me mention his purpose. What is his purpose? Well, Satan has always had an unholy ambition. And, that unholy ambition has been to dethrone God and in throne himself. Satan is a traitor, an open revolt against God. God created Satan and when He did, He created him perfect. As I understand the Bible, Satan was the most magnificent, the most beautiful, the most brilliant, the most wise of all of God's creation, but something happened. Lucifer, who was this angel's name, rebelled against God. He was lifted up with pride and he fell. Isaiah 14 describes it. Beginning in verse 12: *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north...I will be like the most High"* (Isaiah 14:12–14).

One day Lucifer said, "I'm too wise, I'm too brilliant, I'm too cunning to be anything less than God, I will be like God." And, no sooner had that pride erupted in his heart and that rebellion than the sword of Jehovah was unsheathed and the judgment of God came through the corridors of Heaven. And, Satan was banished and Jesus said in our text in verse 18: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). And, he fell, he rebelled, but when he rebelled a third of the angels rebelled with him. These fallen angels are not spirit beings, we call them demons, they do the bidding of the master Satan himself.

So, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers..." (Ephesians 6:12). A number of kingdoms, a number of prinedoms, are all operated by master control. His purpose is to get at God, to literally overthrow God.

#### **V. Satan's Plan**

Now, what is his plan? I've talked to you, dear friend, about his personality. I've talked to you about his power. I've talked to you about his purpose, what is his plan? How does he do his work?

Now, he has many, many methods. The Bible says, *"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11). The word *wiles* is the word we get our word "methodical from." The devil has a systematized plan, he's very methodical, but beneath all that the devil does, listen, beneath all that the devil does is deception. Satan's entire kingdom is built on deception. His chief method is deception. He deceives in order to destroy. Listen to this verse. It's a key

verse. John chapter 8 and verse 44: *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44).

Now, Satan originates the first lie until Satan told a lie there had never been a lie told. He is a liar, he is the father of it. Every time you tell a lie you’re acting just like the devil. Now, this passage of Scripture tells us that Satan’s motive is murder, his method is the lie. He is a murderer and a liar. How does he destroy? Through lying. He deceives that he might destroy. Listen to these verses. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 11 speaks of: *“...the wiles of the devil”* (Ephesians 6:11). 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 11 speaks of: *“...his devices...”* (2 Corinthians 2:11). 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 26 speaks of: *“...the snares of the devil...”* (2 Timothy 2:26). Put those words together, lies, wiles, devices, and snares. The Bible says if it were not for the protecting hand of Almighty God Satan would deceive the very elect. He would deceive you. Don’t think that you have the mind, don’t think that you have wisdom to outsmart, out maneuver the devil. He is a master deceiver. His method, his plan is deception.

My, how he’s deceiving this generation in which we live. The Bible prophesies that the last days are going to be days of a resurgence of demonic activity. *“Satan has come down upon you with great wrath, for he knows that he hath but a little time”* (Revelation 12:12). That means that Satan is like a cornered animal now. He sees the in time coming and he has great, great wrath. If we move into the 1990’s we’re going to see a resurgence of demonic activity like we have never seen before. We need to be solemnly warned because you may not be deceived, your children may be deceived, and your grandchildren may be deceived. And, it is so incumbent upon you to build truth into your own heart and into your own mind and into their minds. New ageism is a dangerous thing. Shirley McLaine has gotten on nationwide television. There is a resurgence now of occultism, extra-sensory perception, astrology, necromancy, demonism, spiritism. It’s so attractive today.

I very seldom go into any kind of bookstore except a Christian bookstore, but sometimes if I’m in an airport somewhere and I need a book or some materials I find myself in a bookstore. And, I go to the section on religion and I can find a few books. I go to the section on astrology or occults and there is shelf, after shelf, after shelf.

If you’ve been in any modern bookstore you know what I’m saying is true. There is a great hunger in the hearts and minds of people for this kind of thing. It is so satanic. The Bible says in 1 John chapter 4: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1). Sometimes someone will get into astrology, necromancy, spiritism, all of this and they’ll say, *“But, Pastor, there’s something to it.”* That’s what I’m trying to tell you, my friend, there is something to it, that’s why you must

leave it alone. Leviticus chapter 19, verse 31: *“Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God”* (Leviticus 19:31).

Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 9 and following: *“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nation”—“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire”—that is, they fed their babies to the demon fire God, Molak, we’re just as bad today with our grizzly abortion business—“or that useth divination...”* (Deuteronomy 18:9–10). That is, this is a fortuneteller, or an observer of times, this is a person who consults his horoscope. Many Baptists, God help us, wake up every morning over their coffee, they turn to their horoscope to see what their day is going to be like. Don’t do that, don’t do that, it is foolish and it is wicked.

An observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer, all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord. And, because of these abominations the *“...the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times”—that is, they followed the horoscope—“and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do”* (Deuteronomy 18:12–14). We have a nation today that is obsessed with this type of thing. It’s a part of the deception of the enemy.

Sometimes teenagers go to a slumber party and somebody brings a Ouija board, or some tarot cards, and they think we’re going to have a little harmless pass time to dabble in the occult. Don’t do it, it’s a good way to get demon possessed, leave it alone. God’s Word is absolutely crystal clear, but the sinister minister fear the devil has deceived so many people. Another deception that is drowning our generation is drug abuse. Do you know who the chief pusher is? Is Satan himself. The Bible specifically warns against drug abuse, the Bible makes it clear that drug abuse is going to be one of the chief sins in the great tribulation. And, by the way, we may only be weeks away from the great tribulation. The rapture may come to day, the Bible speaks of those who are in the tribulation horrors and it mentions the big four sins in the tribulation. And, by the way, there are the big four in Memphis.

Do you want to hear what they are? Revelation 9, verse 21: *“Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts”* (Revelation 9:21). Four things, they are all wired together. One of these things is sorcery. The word *sorcery* comes from the Greek word *pharmakeia*. It’s the Greek word we get our word “pharmacist” from. Young’s Concordance says, “The meaning in Greek is “an enchanter with drugs.” Men have always left their minds open to demonic influence through the use of recreational drugs, “an enchanter with drugs.”

David Wilkerson, founder of Teen Challenge, whose worked with so many drug addicts in Hell's Kitchen in New York City said this, "I have yet to see a man who was into devil worship who did not first of all open his mind with mystical experiences through the use of drugs." The use of drugs. We have a drug oriented society and people pull down their minds, they pull down their defense, they move over into another world there, and they're trying for instant Heaven that leads to everlasting Hell, a synthetic salvation, a drug culture.

It's all around us, the devil has done a good job. And, then he's called *Lucifer*, that means "light bearer," he's called "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Ezekiel 28 tells us that he has musical proclivities. When you think of the airways, the light, the music, you understand how Satan has entered into the entertainment and media system. It use to be that parents were all upset because of backward masking, that is, messages appraised to the devil, put on rock records. But, they don't put it on backward any more, they spell it out as they worship the devil and some foolish parents are sending their teenagers down there to the Coliseum to pay homage to the emperor of the evil empire.

How foolish you are. Some of you parents have bought games for your children to play like dungeons and dragons, dark power, cult of tracks, sorcerers apprentice, chivalry and sorcery, Hell pits of night fang, nice things to put under the Christmas tree aren't they? Dungeons and dragons help the players to act out things in society or things that society forbids like killing and rape. Many of these games are tied together with computers with sound and excitement.

## Conclusion

He's a deceiver folks. Paul Harvey said this and I quote, "If I were the prince of darkness I would want to engulf the whole world in darkness. I would have a third of its real estate and four fifths of its population, but I would not be happy until I had taken siege of the ripest apple on the tree. So, I should set about however necessary to take over the United States. I would begin with a camping of whispers, with the wisdom of the serpent. I would whisper the Bible is a myth, I would convince them that man had created God and instead of the other way around.

I would whisper that what is bad is good and what is good is square. In the ears of the young married I would whisper that work is debasing, that cocktail parties are good for you. I would caution them not to extreme in religion, in patriotism, in moral conduct, and to the old. I would teach them to pray and say after me, "Our father which art in Washington." Then I would get organized, I would educate authors how to make lurid literature exciting so that anything else would appear dull, uninteresting. I would threaten television with dirtier movies and vice versa. I would peddle narcotics to whom

I could and I would sell alcohol to ladies and gentleman of distinction. I would tranquilize the rest with pills. If I were the devil I would encourage schools to refine young intellects, but neglect to discipline emotions, let those run wild. I would designate an atheistic front for me before the high courts and I would get preachers to say, “She’s right.”

I would infiltrate unions and urge more loving, less work. Idle hands usually work for me, with flattery and promise of power I would get the courts to vote against God in favor of pornography. Then I would evict God from the courthouse, from the schoolhouse, from the House of Congress. Then in his own churches I would substitute psychology for religion and I would deify science. If I were Satan I would make the symbol of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a bottle.

If I were the devil I would take from those who have and give to those who want it until I have killed the incentive to be ambitious, then my police state would force everybody back to work. If I were Satan I would just keep on doing what I am doing and the whole world would go to Hell as sure as the devil. That’s what Paul Harvey had to say. Your grandchildren may not make it unless you wise up, your children may not make it, and some of you may not make it.

You say, “Is there any hope?” Absolutely. Jesus in our text said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” And, Jesus said, “I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:18–19). There’s no way, my dear friend that the devil can harm you or hurt you if you abide in the Son of God. These seventy rejoice that they had power over the enemy and Jesus said, “If you want something to rejoice about don’t rejoice in that, rejoice in this, that your names are written in Heaven.” Is your name written in Heaven? Are you saved? How are you going to over come the devil? Revelation chapter 12, verse 11: *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death”* (Revelation 12:11).

# A Caring Church

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 20, 2005

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 10:25–37

*“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”*

LUKE 10:36–37

## Outline

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## Introduction

This morning we talked about a Bible-believing church. Now, tonight we're going to talk about a caring church. This is going to be a commitment service tonight where those of us who are leaders of this wonderful, magnificent church are going to commit and recommit our lives to Jesus Christ.

I want you to turn to Luke chapter 10 if you will and we're going to share together with you the story of the Good Samaritan. Now, in 1931, on September 12, there was a beautiful baby boy born named Adrian, and he was born at the Good Samaritan Hospital. That hospital was named for this particular story that we're going to read about here in Luke chapter 10. And I suppose, other than the story of the prodigal son, this is the best known, best loved parable of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But it is important that we get the background so we can really understand it.

There was a lawyer who came to Jesus and asked Jesus a very pertinent question. Look down in verse 25. “And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him—underscore that—tempted him—tested him—saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Now, get it down plain, big, and straight, this was not an honest question.

This was a dishonest question from a crooked lawyer.

Now, Jesus always answered a dishonest question with another question, and so, here's what Jesus did. Look in Luke 10, verse 26: "And He said to him—that is, Jesus said to him—What is written in the law? How readest thou?" Now, remember, we talked this morning about Jesus coming to fulfill the law? And so, he's going to show this lawyer, how much he is lacking. And the man was a smart lawyer because he had been reading the Book of Deuteronomy and, he had been studying what God said, and so he says in verses 27 through 28, he gives the right answer. Now, it's very important you understand this—a crooked lawyer with the right answer. "And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and with all, and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do and you shall live." That is, "Young man, you think you can keep the law? You keep it and, you'll live." Of course, he couldn't keep it. Jesus knew he did not keep it. But, see, this man had a clear grasp of the demands of the law in the Old Testament, and he had studied Deuteronomy, he'd studied Leviticus, and he had crystallized the whole thing.

Now, understand he had religion, but he had no reality. He was right, but dead right. There's nothing deader than dead orthodoxy, people who have their doctrine, embalmed and pickled, but they do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we see this all of the time. We see people who have head knowledge. And many of you tonight have head knowledge, but if this congregation is like any congregation, there are a great number of people in this congregation have their head knowledge who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever thought about it when the wise men came? Herod wanted to know where Jesus was to be born. "Where's the Messiah to be born so I can go and worship him?" That lying rascal. He wanted to go and obliterate Jesus. But he, who did he ask? He asked the scribes. He asked the Pharisees, the wise men that day. And do you know what? They told him correctly where Messiah was to be born, but they themselves didn't go. Isn't that strange? They had the knowledge. You see, they had a creed, but they didn't have Christ. They had religion, but they didn't have reality.

Sometimes I talk to people and I say, "Are you saved?" and you say, "Oh, yes, I know the plan of salvation." Well, *you're not saved by the plan of salvation; you're saved by the Man of salvation.* You can have the plan. You can have it all.

This man was a smart lawyer, but he was a dishonest lawyer. Look now in verse 29: "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, Who is my neighbor?" Now, he didn't just want to love anybody he didn't have to love. He wanted to close the circle a little bit. He didn't want to overdo things, and so he's asking this question, "Now, who is my neighbor?" Now, notice the answer he gave is to love God with all of your being and

love your neighbor as yourself. Now, he doesn't ask anything about loving God. Do you know why? Because, that's private, that's secret. No one could see his heart. But whether or not he loved his neighbor was something that could be seen. He could say he loved God without any involvement at all. And Jesus told him the story; this is the story that we call the story of a Good Samaritan.

And let's begin reading here in verse 30: "And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment—boys and girls, that means his clothes—and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And, by chance, there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him upon his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he had departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Now which of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves? And he said—that is, the lawyer said—He that showed mercy. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise."

When I study the Bible, I always marvel at the wisdom of Jesus Christ, and especially at His parables. Every parable that Jesus told was a miracle of instruction, and this one is no different.

Now, here was a man trying to justify himself. Here was a man with facts, but not without God. And Jesus tells him the story of the Good Samaritan.

It starts out with a man going from Jerusalem to Jericho. Now, some of you who have traveled Israel with me know that ride from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem is 2,700 feet above sea level. It sits on a mountaintop. It sits on Mount Zion. Jericho is at the lowest spot on earth right there on the shore of the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is 1,300 feet below sea level. And so the picture is here of a man going down, down, down, down. He's going from Jerusalem, the holy city, to Jericho, the heathen city. And it's a very treacherous route. It was in that day and, it could still be today. There were limestone caves, where, thieves could hide. There were groups, gangs that were just trying to catch someone on that lonely highway, and this was no exception. And so, as this man was going down with his back toward the holy place and his face toward the hellish place, going down, down, down, then he's pounced by thieves. Now, these thieves represent the devil. "The thief comes but to kill and to steal and to destroy." And, friend, all around you there are people who are like these thieves. There is a, a hardened cruelty, a callousness in society today. I'm amazed, appalled at what I read

what humans will do to other humans.

There are really three levels of life: there are those, like these thieves, who say, “What’s yours is mine and I’m going to take it from you.” And then there are those like the priest and the Levite that say, “What’s mine is mine and I’m going to keep it.” And then there are those, like the Good Samaritan, who would say, “It’s not really mine. I’m just a steward over it, and I will share with you whatever you need in the name of Almighty God because I love God.”

And so, here’s the story. The man is there within an inch of dying, battered, bruised, bleeding, broken, robbed, destitute, by the side of the road. Now, along comes a priest, and the priest looks at him, sees him, understands his condition, and goes right on. Now, what does the priest represent? If the thieves represent the devil, the priest represents ritualism. The priests were the ones who performed the religious ceremonies. They had all of the rituals and they performed their rituals. But what is Jesus teaching? He’s teaching that religious ritual can’t save anybody. It never has; never will. So the priest just passed on by.

And then a Levite came. Who were the Levites? Well, the Levites were the keepers of the law. They were the experts. They were the legalists of that day. And the Levite passed on by.

Now, the priest represents ritual, the Levite represents rules. And we have a society that we’re trying to somehow help with ritual and rules, and it never will ever, ever get done. I suppose that this priest going along sees this man and, and kind of wraps himself in his robes of self-righteousness and moves aside and passes on. He may have said, “Tsk, ts, so sad. Look at that.”

I read of a man who, walking down the streets of a big city, later told his friends what he saw. He said, “You know, in these big cities they’re so cruel, they’re so heartless.” He said, “I passed by a man asleep in a doorway on that windy city and the dirt and newspapers and everything had blown up around this man. He’s asleep there on the concrete.” And he said, “People were just passing by. There was a piece of humanity on the ground, but they were just passing by—passing by.” He said, “When we came back from lunch, he was still there.” Hello. There we go. We see them. We beat our breasts. “Too bad.” That’s what the priest did.

Now, you know what the Levite may have done; he may have lectured him. He said, “You know, you should never have been out on a lonely road like this. You’ve been headed in the wrong direction anyway. Now, you fell among thieves. You see what your disobedience has done to you? You’re suffering from the consequences of what you’ve done.” And the law can describe us, but the law cannot deliver us.

And then along comes the Good Samaritan. Now, the Samaritans were hated, despised, looked down upon as a mongrel race, and the Jews sniffed at them and really

didn't want to have any company with them. So Jesus uses this story very wisely because, you see, the Samaritan is going to represent Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus, like that Samaritan, despised and rejected of men. And Jesus went to this man and performed an act of compassion, an act of caring.

What does Bellevue need to be? Bellevue needs to be a church of compassion. Now, you know what people think of when they think of our church? What's the first thing they think of? Bigness! Isn't that right? It's so big! And have you ever heard anybody say this—I've heard people say it over and over again—"We made up our mind we would never go to Bellevue because it's so big, but we made a mistake; we went and we got hooked." There are so many people like that, but, you see, we have the impression that we don't care.

People think about big churches. I've heard it over and over again. You couldn't be the pastor of this church without hearing it. They say, "Big churches are not friendly." That's ridiculous. How do you think they got big—by being unfriendly? Well, that's the reason that the church has grown like it has is that people have met love and compassion and friendship. It is a caring church.

Somebody asked a little boy why he passed so many churches on his way to one particular church. He said, "Because they love a guy over there." And that's what this church must continue to do and be. It must be a caring church, a church with compassion.

Now, I want you to notice the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ, who tells us to "Go and do likewise."

## **I. We Should Have a Genuine Compassion**

First of all, it's what I call genuine compassion—genuine compassion. This is not sentimentality. When Jesus said this Samaritan had compassion on him, He used the strongest word for compassion that we find in the Bible. It means he was moved from the depth of his being. Compassion. *Com* means "with." *Passion* means "suffering." To be moved with compassion means that you literally suffer with somebody else.

Jesus saw him and went to him. The Levite saw and passed by. The priest saw and passed by. But the Good Samaritan, who represents in this story to me, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you know, we all have to be careful. I have to be careful. You know, sometimes I get so surrounded by people that, if I'm not careful, my heart can get tough and I can lose tenderness.

I was in an airport some time back, and this was before they had outlawed smoking in the airport. And so I had some work to do, and I found a place where there was no one around. I opened my briefcase, got out my work, and began to work. And there

were no people around me. There were plenty of places to sit. But a man came and sat down right next to me and took out a cigarette and began to smoke. I was breathing into my nostrils the smoke out of that man's nose. I said, "Adrian, be nice." So I didn't say a word to him. I folded up my books, and so forth, and put them in the briefcase and I moved all the way across the hall. That man got up and came all the way across the hall and sat down by me and lit another cigarette. Yah! I still, by the grace of God, didn't say anything. I won't tell you what I was thinking, but I folded up my stuff and put it back in the briefcase. He said, "Don't leave! Please don't leave!" He said, "Aren't you Adrian Rogers?" "Yes, I am." He said, "I need to talk with you. Will you please talk with me?" He said, "I'll put out the cigarette" And I talked to that man, and I thought, you know, how careless can I be? How callous can I be? There are people that are hurting that need us.

This Good Samaritan had genuine compassion. He went, the Bible says, to where the man was. We can sit in our stained-glass country clubs and wonder why they don't come. There's not one shred of Scripture in the Bible that tells a lost man to come to church, not one!

I want to ask you a question: Do you find it difficult to get to church on Sunday morning? If you have children, you really do. It's harder to get to church on Sunday morning than it is to get the kids ready for school on Monday. Why is that? Because the devil doesn't want you to come on Sunday morning. And everything will happen on Sunday morning. By the time you leave the house it looks like a tornado hit it. People are grouchy, and on the way to church you can get in an argument. But you want to come. What about those who don't even want to come? It's a miracle that any of them come. And we ought to be grateful when they do come. But there's no Scripture that tells an unsaved man to come to church, but there are plenty of Scriptures that tell the church to go to the unsaved. That was a good place for an amen. You see, we ought not to be amazed that they don't come. We ought to be amazed that we don't go. This was genuine compassion. This man went to where he was.

I was driving down the road the other day and I saw a billboard. And it showed a canister with a spray in it. It was for sunburn and things like that. Do you know what the name of the product was? Spray-on Compassion. It was compassion. That was the name of whatever was in the can. And you go, "Pfsst, pfsst, pfsst." You don't have to touch anybody. You just spray it on. Well, friend, there is no spray-on compassion. Jesus touched people not only physically, but emotionally. It was genuine compassion.

## **II. We Should Have a Gracious Compassion**

Next, it was gracious compassion. Look, if you will, in verse 34. It says, "And Jesus went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him upon his

own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” He went to where the man was and met him as he was.

Now, folks, there are a lot of people that we might wrap our robes of self-righteousness around ourselves and avoid, but we need to have a gracious compassion. Aren't you glad that Jesus came to you where you were? He found me where I was. I wasn't seeking Him anymore than this wounded man was seeking the Good Samaritan. But, you see, it's a genuine compassion. It's a gracious compassion.

### **III. We Should Have a Gentle Compassion**

And it is a gentle compassion. I want you to see what the Good Samaritan did for this man. Look, if you will, in verse 34 again: “And he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

#### **A. The Cleansing of Compassion**

Now, what does the wine represent? The precious blood of Jesus. He poured wine into these wounds of this man to cleanse as an antiseptic. It represents the blood of Jesus. But then he poured in oil, not only to cleanse, but to sooth.

#### **B. The Comfort of Compassion**

Oil, in the Bible, is a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God. You see, what real compassion does—it brings the blood that cleanses and the Spirit that comforts.

#### **C. The Covering of Compassion**

And then not only is there the cleansing, and the comforting, but there's the covering. He bound him up. He took bandages and wrapped this man up. This broken man was bound by the tender hands of the Good Samaritan.

#### **D. The Carrying of Compassion**

And then not only did he cleanse and comfort and cover, but he carried him. He picked him up, put him upon his beast, his donkey, and carried him where he needed to go.

#### **E. The Caring of Compassion**

And not only did he cleanse him and comfort him and cover him and carry him, but he cared for him. He brought him to the inn and said, “Take care of him. Here are the resources. And if that's not enough, when I come again, I'll repay you. You just take care of these.” It was a gentle compassion and it was a generous compassion.

What is Jesus saying? You want to know who your neighbor is? A neighbor is somebody who has a need. No matter where they are and no matter what it cost, we need to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

**There's a story that comes out of World War II. Every time I think about it, it haunts**

me. It took place in a Polish village. The Nazis decided they needed to eradicate the Jews in that village. And they took them outside of the city and made them dig a shallow grave, then lined them up; husbands, wives, children, all of them lined up in a line, and then they took a machine gun and cut them down, and they fell into that grave. Then they brought the machinery and smoothed the grave over.

A little boy was standing there, and for whatever reason, he was not hit by a bullet. But when everyone else fell, he fell also, pretending he'd been shot. They buried him, but the soil was loose and the grave was shallow, and there was an air pocket where he could breathe. He was covered with the blood of his mother and father, caked with dirt. But he waited a while till he didn't hear any noise above ground and dug his way out of that grave: bloody, dirty, frightened, alone, an orphan. He went to a door, knocked on the door. A woman came out and recognized him as a Jewish boy. She knew what the danger would be to her if she harbored a Jewish boy. She said, "Go away! Shut the door. The little boy went to another house, knocked on the door. The same thing happened. "Go away! I can't help you! I'm sorry, but I can't help you. Go away!" He went to a third house, knocked on the door. The lady came to the door and started to say something. He said, "Wait a minute. Don't you know who I am? I am the Jesus you say you worship." She said, "Child, come in, come in!"

You say, "Well, pastor, these people alongside the road, beaten and battered and bruised, they're not my responsibility." But Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you've done it unto the least of one of these, you've done it unto me."

I want Bellevue Baptist Church to be a caring church, a compassionate church. Now, it doesn't always have to be as dramatic as helping a little boy who's dug out of a grave, but I want to talk to you, church, for just a moment in a very practical way as to how we can make Bellevue in the future a more loving church.

Tonight, we have our leadership here. And, by the way, our leadership ought to be in church every Sunday night. Say amen. All right now, leaders, you need to set the tone. You need to set the atmosphere. Sometimes I go around and I hear preachers talking about, "Oh, these people in my church." I said, "How long have you been there?" They tell me. I say, "You're not talking about them; you're talking about you." Leadership sets the tone. You need to be approachable. You need to be real. Don't be phonies. Learn to greet people personally when they come into this church. Don't be so self-concerned that you don't greet people personally. Shake hands warmly. Give a friendly touch. Be like Jesus, the Good Samaritan, who looked on this man. Give everyone a look, a word, a touch. They said of Jesus in the song, "He touched me." And I don't mean to drape yourself around somebody's neck. I don't mean to be overly familiar with someone, but you just can't have this spray-on compassion. It's more important to influence people than it is to impress them. Do you know why we have difficulty memorizing peoples'

names? Because we're trying to impress them. We're so concentrated on ourselves that we don't fasten our eyes, our hearts, our minds, upon these people. Church, when people come into this place, put a welcome sign on your face! Learn to smile. Go to the mirror and practice, if you have to. Learn to laugh.

A little boy was in a revival meeting. He got moved to witness. He turned to a somber-looking man, looked like he'd been weaned on a dill pickle, and he turned to him and said, "Sir, are you a Christian?" He said, "Son, I'm a deacon." He said, "Mister, it doesn't matter what you done, God will save you."

Some of you deacons, put a welcome sign on your face. They come down here to help us on Sunday morning. Don't look like the defensive line for the Green Bay Packers. Jesus. You say, "Pastor, do you mean I'm to smile even when I don't feel like it?" Yep! Jesus said, "When you fast, don't disfigure your face." Make certain that your countenance reflects what's on the inside.

Now, watch first impressions. I read somewhere that people, when they come to a church, make up their mind whether or not they like the church in the first 12 minutes. Now, I can't vouch for the exactitude of that, but I believe there's enough truth in that to make up our minds. It's so important. It is so important that you find a guest that come to this place and you do what I've said, that you greet them personally, you put a smile on your face that says welcome.

I'm not going to call any names, but we had something happen right down here at the front. It's been long enough ago perhaps I can say it now. But a woman came in, and there was a stranger, a guest, sitting in the seat right down here. And our member said to that woman, "You're going to have to move. That's my seat." Can you believe that? I say, can you believe that? That woman should have been willing to stand outside in the rain to let a guest sit in that seat. It's not your seat. It belongs to Jesus. And we need to watch our first impressions, the impression we make.

You fly on an airplane. Do you know how you get your impression of the airline? Not from the president of the airline, but from the ticket clerk behind the counter and the stewardess. Those two people tell you more, as far as you're concerned, what the airline is like—the ticket clerk and the steward or the stewardess. They are more important to you. They give a different impression to you than the president or the pilot.

Now, folks, it's not enough to come to the "Jim and Adrian Show." It's not enough to hear the choir. You are the ones on the front lines when people walk in this door to make them feel welcome, to be the Good Samaritan.

And let me just talk something practical here. We have a lot of our Sunday school classes here. We don't need to embarrass our guests. Do you know why I do what I do when I welcome the guests? And maybe you get tired of it. But, I say, "If you're a member, welcome, join me in welcoming our guests, would you lift your hand." And then

I say to our guest, "If you'd like these materials, lift your hand." But I never try to manipulate people. And if you'll listen carefully, you'll hear me say, "There's an emblem for your lapel. You may wear it if you like. And it'll help us to show you a little extra courtesy perhaps. And there's a guest card. Would you do me the kindness of placing that card in the offering plate." And I put this caveat there from time to time. "You don't have to do that if you don't want to." We're not here to manipulate people. You cannot imagine what an unsaved person or an un-churched person may feel when they come to something like Bellevue. Let me help you to imagine it.

Imagine that you have neighbors that are Buddhists. And they invite you to a Buddhist temple, but you don't want to go. But they're good neighbors and you love them, and, finally, you go to a Buddhist temple. You would be frightened. You would think everybody there knows that you're not a Buddhist and they're all watching you.

Now, what we need to do is to lower that apprehension factor that is in people. People don't like to stand up and speak in public. Do you know the three biggest fears that people have? Number one is to go to a party with perfect strangers. Number two is to make a speech in public. And number three, to answer personal questions in public; the three biggest social fears that people have. And what do we do? We get people in a Sunday school class and we say, "Stand up and tell us something about yourself." Inside they are dying! Now, what we need to do is to make them feel welcome with a gift of hospitality. Classes, you need to do this. Have often nametags and put the names on for people like me in big letters.

Sometimes I get so upset. I'll go to a convention or something. Let's just say it's National Religious Broadcasters. I've just been to that. And that's not true about National Religious Broadcasters, but I'm just using that for an example. And on the card they will have letters about an inch high that say, "National Religious Broadcasters," and down at the bottom the person's name. Well, look, I know I'm at the conference, see? It's the stupidest thing. Excuse me. Joyce says I can't say that word. Put the name big so if you don't know their name, at least you can act like you know it. You can glance across the room and see it.

Do you know what happens in our church sometimes? We think we're having fellowship. We think that we are so loving, but do you know who we are loving? One another! We get in our holy huddles, our sacred society for snubbing sinners, and they're around us and we don't know it.

A while back I walked out of that door. The reason I don't get out here early is because almost always I have a meeting. This morning, I met with people before church, before the 9:30 service. I met with people between the 9:30 service and the 11:00 service. I met with people after the 11:00 service. This afternoon, I came down here and did a wedding. Then I went over to the children, where we dedicated the

babies. I'm not feeling sorry for myself, but what I'm saying this, that it's always a treat to me, a joy, when I can get out and not have to be locked by some responsibility. I came out early. This place was about one third filled. I saw a young lady; she may be here tonight, but she was sitting over there by herself. And I thought, well, you know, she looks a little lonely. She looked like she was in her mid 20s to 30s. And I went and sat down beside her. I asked her, I said, "How are you doing?" She said, "Not good, not good at all." I said, "Well, tell me about it." She said, "My husband has gone away. He's left us. He's forsaken myself and the children." She said, "I don't know what to do. Thank you for coming to sit by me." And I tried to minister to her and give her a word of encouragement and to pray for her. I got a letter from her later. She said, "You will never know this side of heaven what that meant." She said, "I was ready to throw it all in, but I said to God, 'I'm going to church one more time. God, if you really love me, let me know it.'" And she said, "Of all of the people in that vast auditorium, you came and sat down beside me and prayed for me and cared for me." We need to practice at Bellevue to be a caring church, non-judgmental love. That's what Jesus did.

Now, we need to understand the difference in acceptance and approval. We can accept people without approval. We may not approve of the way they dress, the way they look. Some things, friend, really kind of bother me. I'll tell you, a big, high thing on my get-bothered list is to see somebody with a stud on their tongue. Now, folks, and if you're here with one on your tongue, I'm sorry, but the point is you're very welcome. That's the point. You're welcome. I mean, there's a difference between approval and acceptance. Do you know why they crucified Jesus? Because they said He was a friend of sinners.

What did this Samaritan do? He went down to a man who had turned his back on Jerusalem, was going down to Jericho. Jesus did not come to condemn; He came to save. He never lowered the standard. The Bible says that He was harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, and yet He came to us where we are.

## **Conclusion**

That's enough of all of this. But if Bellevue and our leadership can learn to love and to care, friend, it is incredible what God will do through this church. My prayer for Bellevue Baptist Church is that we will be a caring church. Our rituals, our rules are not enough. This world needs our compassion. Say amen, congregation.

Now, what we're going to do tonight. Ushers, would you stand. The ushers have a form that they're going to pass one out to you tonight. And, on one side it says, "Our Commitment." On the other side it speaks of Bellevue's mission statement. Now, I've asked you to memorize Bellevue's mission statement, but perhaps, you've never even

known that we've had one. But Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of: Magnifying JESUS through worship and the Word, moving believers in JESUS toward maturity and ministry, and making JESUS known, to our neighbors and the nations. That's what we're all about, and you're a part of it, and you need to acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, as the head of the church, and faithfully commit to Him and to His church. And so, this is a commitment form. You're not going to give it to me. It's a bookmark to put in your Bible.

And on the side it says commitment, it says:

I commit to pray for our search committee.

Number two: to pray for my church. It's your church and His church.

Number three: to continue my leadership responsibilities. Don't you dare say that when we're without a pastor and the search committee is doing its work, that's the time for me to let down. It is not! Don't say, "Well, Adrian's not here this morning. Let's go over to ABC Church." Don't do it! If there's ever a time when you need to be faithful, this is the time to continue my leadership responsibilities.

To support my church staff. Now, we have a wonderful staff—good and godly men and women—and they serve you, and you need to support them and pray for them.

To be faithful in my church attendance. I'm grateful that you're here tonight. It's a rainy night, but I don't really brag on you too much for that when early Christians faced the lions and the flame and beating and stoning for the privilege of worshiping together.

Number six: to pray for a support our new pastor. Now, church, listen to me. We have a committee. We prayerfully selected that committee. Say amen. Number two: we have been praying for that committee day after day after day. I hope you have. So we're praying and asking God and believing God. Now, if we have a committee, a God-anointed and appointed, if we're praying for them, whoever they recommend to us, we're going to say amen. That was so weak. Whoever they recommend to us, we're going to say amen. Now, I'll tell you what. I would not think of not approving someone that this committee presents to us. I wouldn't even think about it. Why? Because I believe they're God's people. We have prayed. We believed God. Now, nobody's going to please everybody. If he does, he'll please the devil most of all. Every now and then, people say, "Oh, Pastor, no, everybody loves you." I say, "Hardy har-har-har." No, they don't! But this church, and especially our core leadership, supports the present pastor and will support the new one.

And then I promise to honor God in all my words and actions. I will never do anything to disgrace the name of Jesus or His church.

Now, I'm going to ask you to make this commitment and to sign this and put it in your Bible. But we're going to have a commitment service right now. And that's the reason that some are in the balconies tonight because they're sitting by classes. And

I'm going to ask people to come in ever-widening circles and stand here, not to kneel because there won't be enough room to kneel.

But, first of all, I'm going to ask my associate and our associate pastor, Mark Dougharty. Mark, I want you to come and stand right down here in the front. This man is going to have a tremendous load on his shoulders and he's, just turn around and face me so I can talk right at you. All right. This is Mark Dougharty. We ought to thank God for him.

And in the absence of a pastor we have selected, three men to act as Lay Executive Committee: Brian Miller, Steve Tucker, and Jeff Arnold. And they're going to be consulting with our associate pastor and they're going to take the place of a pastor. I'm going to ask these godly men to come and stand here. God bless you. Is Jeff Arnold out tonight? Okay. Jeff is up there. He's coming.

Then I'm going to ask the Executive Staff of our church. And when I say Executive Staff, that doesn't mean they're one whit better than any staff member. Just that speaks of their responsibility that they have. Things don't just happen here automatically. You've been a Bellevue member for very long and you see a lot of wonderful things happen. You say, "How does it happen?" Well, our Executive leadership leads. I'm going to ask David Smith, Craig Parker, Bryson McQuiston, and David Powell to come and stand here. All right. Some of them are coming out of the balcony. While they're coming, it seems strange to me it takes three of you to make one of me. Just a joke! All right. And others are still coming, making their way here. This is what we call Executive Staff.

Then I'm going to ask the others of our ordained ministers, men who are ordained ministers. They may not have the job of pulpit ministry, but their lives have been set aside to the gospel and they are ordained to the gospel ministry. I'm going to ask all of you men to come, if you will, right now. Every ordained minister on our staff and come and stand down here.

And now I'm going to ask our deacon officers, if you're a deacon officer, I want you to come. All of our deacon officers if you'll come. You can make a double line there or you can go out far. It doesn't make any real difference. Thank you.

Now, I'm going to ask other Bellevue staff. If you're on the staff here in any way, if you receive remuneration from our church, and you ought to because the Bible says the workman is worthy of his hire, I'm going to ask other staff if you will come. All the entire Bellevue Church staff. Just get up and come. Staff members, male and female, I want you to come.

Now, if you're on the Pastor's Search Committee, a number of them, perhaps all of them, are already down here. But if you're on the Pastor's Search Committee and you're not down here yet, would you please come, these people that we are soaking in

prayer. I stuck my head in tonight and saw them hard at work, and I'm so grateful for it.

Now, I'm going to ask all of our committee chairmen, if you are the chairman of any committee here at Bellevue Baptist Church, and have we got the committees. I'm expecting us to have a committee on committees to promote the promotion. But if you're a committee person, I want you to come. Just get up out of your seat and come right down here, not if you're a person, but if you're a chairman. We don't have room for all the personnel, but just the chairmen of our various committees, if you'll come from the balcony, from wherever you are. God bless you.

Now, if you are a Bible Fellowship teacher and you're not already down here. Many of these who are teachers are already here. But if you teach a Bible Fellowship class from children through adults, I want you to come and stand down here with me, all of our teachers. And you can make room going all the way across. A mighty army! You might have to just spread from wall to wall, just do it. Double up here and come.

And while these are coming, I'm going to ask all of those who are officers in the choir to come. If you're not already here, you're a choir officer, I want you to come. That's right. Come on. Those on that side, you can just keep on moving back. That's fine. Now, let me say a word to all of you. The Bible says, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." I would be absolutely petrified to serve in any position represented here with an unclean heart. There's no excuse for one. If you have anything in your heart toward another person that's not right, any ungodly habit, anything that anyone has ought against you that you've not tried to make right, I admonish you, I challenge you in the name of Jesus to make it right. I want you, friends, to be as pure as the driven snow, to be as holy as God can make a man or a woman, I want you to be that way. These are serious days. Even if we were not getting new pastor, these are serious days. And I want you, please, for Jesus' sake and our sake, to be all that you can be. One of the proverbs that I use frequently—it's not a Bible proverb, but it is certainly a proverb that stirs my heart. It asks a question. Here's the question. If the gold rusts, what shall the iron do? You're supposed to be the gold. I mean, you're the leaders. The Bible says of a pastor, he's to be a man found blameless. We're not sinless, but we're to be blameless. Nobody can point the finger of blame at us and say, "It is your fault." I want you to double and redouble your faithfulness. Do not let down in this period of time. Do not get discouraged. Believe God. And do better, by God's grace, than you've ever done. And what I'm saying to these dear people out here or up here, I'm saying to you folks out there. We're going to commit ourselves and recommit ourselves to Jesus Christ tonight. What a mighty army God has given us. I'm so grateful for each of you. I love you, I salute you, and I'll never stop loving you till Jesus comes. Be faithful unto death! Be faithful! Be faithful! Be faithful! In the name of Jesus. And I'm going to pray for you. I want you to bow your heads.



# How to Be a Good Friend

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 6, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 10:25–37

*“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”*

LUKE 10:33–34

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Criminal Inhumanity
- II. Casual Indifference
- III. Compassionate Involvement
  - A. It Was Genuine Compassion
  - B. It Was Gracious Compassion
  - C. It Was Gentle Compassion

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you turn in God’s Word to Luke chapter 10? When you’ve found it, look up here for a moment. I want to talk to you today on this subject: “How to Be a Good Friend.” And the story that we have today is in a way a familiar one. It’s about a parable—perhaps the best-loved parable that Jesus ever gave, except for the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Coin. This is the parable of the Good Samaritan. Now I have a special interest in this parable, because in West Palm Beach, Florida, I was born a few years ago in the Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach, Florida. And that hospital received its name from the story we’re about to read to you today.

Now I want us to look, if we will, beginning in verse 25: *“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him,”*—that means he tested Jesus—*“saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Now right away we know this was not a sincere question. This was a question from a lawyer, an insincere lawyer testing Jesus. *“He said unto him,”*—that is, Jesus said unto him—*“What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all*

*thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself...*—now, underscore that or you're going to miss it; he's testing Jesus and trying to justify himself—*“he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise.”* (Luke 10:25–37)

Now in understanding this story, we're going to have to understand the background and the setting. This man who came to Jesus was a self-righteous man with a dishonest question. Now if you don't understand that, you're going to miss it. He was a self-righteous man wanting to justify himself, and he had a dishonest question that he asked the Lord Jesus. The Bible says he was tempting Jesus; he was testing Jesus.

Now, let me tell you something about the Lord Jesus Christ. If you come to Jesus with an honest question, you'll always get an honest answer. But if you come to Jesus with a dishonest question, Jesus will not answer the question; He will ask you a question. Jesus always answered a dishonest question with another question. And so He just turned the question back on this lawyer. You see, this man was a shrewd lawyer; he was a smart lawyer, because Jesus said, “Well, what do you read in the Bible in answer to the question?” Look again in verse 26: *“He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?”* Jesus said, “You're a lawyer. What does the law say?” *“And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”* (Luke 10:26–27)

Now here was a man who had a good question. Look again in verse 25: *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Jesus says, “What does the law say?” “Well,” he says, “the law says you're to love God with your total being.” Now evidently this man had studied the Bible. He knew the Bible; he had analyzed the Bible. His answer came from Deuteronomy, and his answer came from the book of Leviticus. He knew all of that. He

had religion, but he did not have life. He was religious, but lost. And so the Lord Jesus Christ begins to deal with this man, because not only was he a smart lawyer; he was a bad lawyer. He was a dishonest lawyer. Right away, he's looking for a loophole in the law. Jesus said, "That's right: love God with all of your being, and love your neighbor as yourself." And then this man, the Bible said in verse 29, "*willing to justify himself,*" said, "All right, who is my neighbor?" Look in verse 29, if you will: "*He, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*" (Luke 10:29)

Now you'll have to read through all of this. This man had a creed, but he did not have salvation. He knew something about the law of God, but he had no real life in his heart. He was religious, but lost, and he was looking for a loophole. He had no question about loving God. I mean, "Love God with all of your heart": he says, "Okay, I can do that. That's fine." But then Jesus said, "And love your neighbor as yourself." He said, "Now, wait a minute. Who is my neighbor?"

Now, what was this man's problem? He had no difficulty loving God, because as far as he was concerned, God was nowhere around. But people were all over. Now he didn't want to go too far. He didn't want to love anybody he didn't have to love. He could love God abstractly; but, you see, people are all around him. And he had to get this so-called "religion" of his out of the ethereal and down into the real life in which he was living. So he had no problem with the part that said, "Love God with all of your being," but he did not want to love anybody on this planet that he didn't have to love.

¶ He was like the man who boasted so much about how he loved children. He said, "I just love children." Then one day the man had pulled into the driveway in front of his house, and while the concrete was wet the little kids came out there and made doodles and put their initials and so forth in the concrete. When the man came out, he was infuriated and began to chase the little children. And somebody said, "I thought you loved little children." He said, "I love them in the abstract; I don't love them in the concrete."¶

And that's the way this man was. He loved God in the abstract, but he did not love his neighbor in the concrete. He did not want to go further than he had to go. Now the Apostle John must have been thinking about this man. Put this verse in your margin—1 John chapter 4, verse 20: "*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:*"—now I can tell you, if your heart is headquarters for hate, if you hate, don't tell me you love God—because you do not: you're a liar—"for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20) Well, this man, a shrewd lawyer, but a man with a wicked heart, was looking for an alibi; he was looking for somewhere that he could draw a line. He wanted a limit. He wanted a boundary. He wanted a minimum. He just simply wanted to get by.

Now that is the background for the passage of Scripture. This man with a dishonest

question, tempting Jesus, said, *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Jesus said, *“What does the Bible say?”* He says, *“Well, love God with all of your heart. Love your neighbor as yourself.”* Jesus says, *“Fine.”* But he says, *“Wait a minute: who is my neighbor?”* All right, do you have the background? Good.

## **I. Criminal Inhumanity**

Now, let’s look at the story itself. Jesus gave this parable, and the first part of the parable is a story of criminal inhumanity. Look in verse 30. Here is the parable that Jesus gave: *“And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment,”*—that is, his clothing—*“and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.”* (Luke 10:30)

Now Jerusalem sits on a mountain, Mount Zion, 2,700 feet above sea level. Jericho is situated near the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on the face of Planet Earth. The Dead Sea is thirteen hundred feet below sea level. So there’s a distance there of about four thousand feet. And here is the man going from Jerusalem, which was the city of the great God, down to Jericho, which was a pagan city, a heathen city. And so he’s going from the holy city to the hellish city. He is going down, down, down. Here is a picture of humanity going away from God—from the holy city to the hellish city, from the heights to the depths. And as this man is going from Jerusalem to Jericho, he falls among thieves.

I’ve traveled this road, this Jericho road, many, many times, and it’s a winding road going down, down, down, down, down, down. And the bus driver will always say when you get below sea level, *“Now, raise the windows on the bus: we’re going below sea level.”* And you go down, down, down, down. And there are limestone caves there, and sharp curves, and big boulders and rocks. It was a perfect place in that day—and even today—for criminals to hide, for muggers to hide, for thieves and robbers to hide. It was a very dangerous journey going from Jerusalem to Jericho. And that’s what happened to this man: he fell upon thieves. What they did: they beat him; they stoned him; they kicked him; they stripped the clothes from him; they took all of his wealth, left him there in a pool of crimson blood. And he is dying; he is half-dead. That means he was on his way to complete death. He is a picture now of humanity going away from God, battered and robbed by the devil.

Now, what does that have to do with us today? Because we’re not just interested in this lawyer so long ago; not merely interested in this parable, as wonderful as it is. But we have to ask ourselves, *“What did it mean then? How does it apply today?”* And then, folks, precious friend, you have to ask yourself, *“How does it apply to you personally this morning?”* Did you know that we live in a city of people who are going from Jerusalem to Jericho; that they’re on their way away from God, going down, down, down, down, and they have been beaten and robbed by Satan?

There are those who are wounded domestically—broken homes. I hear more and more about broken homes and bruised hearts, homes that are being divided by Satan, many who are wounded emotionally. I'm meeting more and more little children who are the victims of abuse, and more and more young people have become the sexual plaything of some perverted man. And their little hearts and lives, they are emotionally wounded. We meet so many who are wounded physically, people who have an addiction to drugs and alcohol. We have those who are hurting, some of them an army of the walking dead. We have those who are wounded economically. You may go today after church to a good meal. But not everybody will. Don't get the idea that because you have plenty, everybody has plenty; and don't get the idea that those who don't have don't have just simply because they will not work. Some are in that category. But I'll tell you, it would break your heart if you knew of the poverty and the heartache that many have. They have been stripped by the devil and wounded economically. And how many are wounded spiritually? They may be living in fine houses, but they're caught up in cults; they're caught up in humanism; they're caught up in liberal religion—and Satan has stripped them and left them half-dead.

And in that row that you're sitting on this morning, wherever you are, I daresay, there's somebody with a broken heart from aisle to aisle on that row that you're sitting on—somebody with a broken heart. Folks, ours is a hurting world. They are all around us. Hearts are crushed and bruised and bleeding and broken. There are people who need love. Criminal inhumanity—a man on his way down, down, down from the holy city to the hellish city, who falls among thieves, stripped, wounded, bleeding, dying, robbed. That's what Satan has done for us. That's the first part of this parable that Jesus gave. It's found in verse 30.

## **II. Casual Indifference**

But, you see, not only do you have that criminal inhumanity, but there's another thing that's just as bad—and that's a casual indifference. Look, if you will, in verse 31: "*And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side*" (Luke 10:31–32)—a priest and a Levite. Now the priest was the one who performed religious rituals of that day. The Levites were the ones who were the custodians of the law. So what these two represent is religion—religion with its rituals, and religion with its rules. The priest: religion with its rituals. The Levite: religion with its rules.

Now, remember that Jesus is talking to a self-righteous man, a man who doesn't want to love anybody that he doesn't have to love. May I say this—that this man that had been talking to Jesus was religious, but he didn't have spiritual life. Jesus came to

save men from sin and from religion, and I believe the second is harder to do than the first. A self-righteous man: religion without Christ. Religion will make you a bigot; religion will make you cruel; religion will make you self-righteous, if you do not have the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to have to understand that here was a man that asked Jesus this question: he was already a religious man.

The Apostle Paul, before he got saved, before he met the Lord Jesus Christ, was a religious man. Listen to these verses found in Philippians chapter 3. Paul is describing his life B.C.—before Christ. He says, “*Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;*”—now, folks, what you've just listened to is a pedigree of no mean repute. Here was a dossier. I mean it: if Paul in this day had put this in his biographical sketch, they would say, “This is a top-drawer guy.” I mean, he had it all. He had the right birth. He had the right education. He had the right attainment. He was right in the middle of it. And then, not only did he have the pedigree; he had the works to back it up—“*concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*” He said, “I keep these commandments.” But then he went on to say, “*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*” (Philippians 3:5–7) He said, “All of the things that I had on the positive side of the ledger, I had to take from the positive side of the ledger and I had to put them on the negative side of the ledger. My birth, my education, my zeal—all of it,” he said, “I count them as but refuse, as but dung, that I might gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8)

Again, I want to say that I'm speaking to some today, and doubtless to many by television: you are lost in religion. How sad that is! *The devil had just as soon send you to hell from the pew as from the gutter.* As a matter of fact, he would rather do so, because so many people like this lawyer are religious but lost. If religion can save you, which religion is right? Which one? Christendom? Confucianism? Mohammedism? Buddhism? Zoroastrianism? Judaism? Catholicism? Protestantism? Rheumatism? Which one? Which of these religions can save? None of them! Only Jesus can save. *I hear people talk about being “dyed-in-the-wool Baptists.” You had better be a washed-in-the-blood Baptist.* Being a Baptist won't save you. Being a Bellevue Baptist won't save you. *Somebody said, “You are one of those narrow-minded preachers that think only Baptists are going to heaven.” I'm a lot more narrow-minded than that: I don't think a lot of Baptists are going, and I think a lot of people who are not Baptists are going.* But I don't think anybody is going without the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here was a man who was religious; he had all of this. Again, Jesus came to save men from sin and from religion, and the last is sometimes more difficult than the first. Now the priest represented religion with its rituals. The priest came by. Here's this man lying in his own blood. The priest, who had been to church, perhaps, that day; to the

temple, perhaps, that day; to the synagogue, perhaps, that day, wraps his self-righteous robes around him, and he passes by and leaves that man wounded and bleeding and dying. And he just passes right on by. What is Jesus teaching? Jesus is teaching that religion with its rituals cannot save you.

And then the Levite comes. Now, remember that the Levites were the custodians of the law. The Levite, the Bible says something a little different about him; it says he comes and looks at him, he studies him, and then he leaves him. (Luke 10:32) The law can describe us. The law can study us. The law can condemn us. But the law cannot save us. Here's what the Bible says in Galatians 3, verse 10: *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."*

(Galatians 3:10) I can see this lawyer as he comes and looks at this man and says, "Oh, what a mess you're in! Look at you! What were you doing down here anyway? Don't you know that travel on this road by yourself is dangerous? You have gotten exactly what you deserve. And, furthermore, you are going to die. So long!" That's all the law can do. The law can describe us. The law can condemn us. But the law cannot save us.

Now Jesus in this parable speaks of religion—religion with its rituals, and religion with its rules. Your neighbor needs something more than that. This city needs something more than that. This city does not give a hoot about Bellevue Baptist Church and its rituals and its rules. Did you know that? They don't care. That's not what they need. They need compassion. They need Jesus. They need a friend. There are people out there who are bruised and battered and beaten and weakened and robbed and dying. We come to church on Sunday morning and sing our songs and think we've done God a wild favor. And many of us may be just like these people that Jesus is describing right here.

Well, what was wrong with both of these men? Their problem was not primarily gross iniquity, but gross indifference. And rather than being a part of the solution, they became a part of the problem. They were not the ones who beat the man. They were not the ones who robbed the man. It is not that they did something; it is that they did nothing. Listen to me. They did nothing. They simply passed him by.

Did you know that the sin of omission is greater than the sin of commission? What do you have to do to kill Bellevue Baptist Church? Fight against it? Not necessarily. That might make it stronger. What do you have to do to kill Bellevue Baptist Church? Ignore it. I'm speaking to some of you who ought to be in church this morning, but you're worshipping at Bedside Baptist. Do you think that this service on television is a substitute for church attendance when you can get here? If I thought that, I would get off television. The Bible clearly and plainly says that we are not to forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."* (Hebrews 10:25) Did you know that

when you stay away from church, it's a vote to close the doors? And if everybody voted as you voted this morning, there wouldn't be anybody here today. Think about it. All you have to do is simply nothing.

Jesus said, *"He that is not with me is against me."* (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23) You say, "Well, I'm okay. I don't oppose the church. That's fine." No, no, friend. That's what the priest did: passed right on by. That's what the Levite did: passed right on by. And many in the church also are passing right on by those who have needs or hurts.

### III. Compassionate Involvement

All right now, here's the third thing. First of all, what did I say there was? Criminal inhumanity. We live in a world that is hurting. Secondly, casual indifference: they passed on by. Thirdly, compassionate involvement. You're going to see that the Good Samaritan who ministered to this man is really a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Samaritans were a despised race. They were the ones who were left behind after Israel was carried away into captivity. And they intermarried; they married with the heathen round about them. And they were what people sometimes called a *mongrel* race. And they had some of their own religion, and they had some foolish ideas. Many of them were living in poverty. And the Jews of this day had no dealings with the Samaritans—none whatsoever! To fraternize or to be a friend to a Samaritan was an unthinkable thing.

Now Jesus talks about a Samaritan, and He calls that Samaritan "the Good Samaritan." Notice in verse 33: *"But a certain Samaritan,"—"a certain Samaritan";* I like that: *"a certain Samaritan"—"as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."* (Luke 10:33–35) Who is that a picture of? That is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me tell you what Jesus is like, because what Jesus was saying to this man is, "This is what you need to be like, also."

#### A. It Was Genuine Compassion

First of all, Jesus had genuine compassion—not false compassion; genuine compassion. Look in verse 33. The Bible says, *"He...came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him."* (Luke 10:33) This is not mere sentimentality; this is compassion. The word *compassion*, our English word, comes from two words: *com-*, meaning "with," and *-passion*, which means "to feel deeply." A person who has compassion sees people through the eyes of Christ. *Compassion* means "with suffering,

with feeling.” And the Bible says that the Good Samaritan saw him. The problem with so many of us is we just don’t see. I mean, we just don’t look. We’re so busy that we pay no attention. They are all around us. Thank God that Jesus, the Good Samaritan, saw him.

¶ I was in an airport a while back waiting for an airplane, and I had my briefcase. If I’m on the road, I constantly take my office with me, my briefcase. And I was there. I wanted to study. I needed to study. I had work to do. I spread it all out. And the place was thick with cigarette smoke. In that airport, in Charlotte, in that gate, you could smoke. I just don’t like cigarette smoke. I mean, I don’t like to breathe it. I don’t like to get it in my hair. I don’t like to get it in my clothes. Hey, folks, it stinks. And so I’m there and there’s all that cigarette smoke. I said, “Well, I don’t have to sit in this.” I looked across there, and there was an absolutely empty gate. I packed all my books up. My briefcase was bulging. I finally got a snap down. I walked all the way across—way, way, way, way, way over here—not a person around me. I opened my briefcase. I took my work out and started to work. And from that gate over there a man got up and came all the way across. Now I mean, a big gate, but he just sat down right next to me. And he takes out a pack of cigarettes and he lights up right there. I’m breathing smoke out of his mouth.

The old Adrian wanted to rise up; but Jesus said, “Down, boy.” And so I just said, *okay* to myself and I put all this stuff back in the briefcase. I started packing it back up again. I was going to move to another one. Do you know what he said to me? He said, “Don’t move: I’ll put it out.” And then he said, “Aren’t you Adrian Rogers?” Whew, I’m glad Jesus said, “Down, boy.” He said, “Aren’t you Adrian Rogers?” I said, “Yes I am.” “Oh,” he said, “I need to talk to somebody. I need help. I’m hurting.” And I thought to myself, “Adrian, how blind you could have been that day; how obnoxious you could have been that day, if you would have let your old nature take over!” I’m telling you, folks, I’m glad that God overruled the old Adrian for a moment and let the new man come through, because they are all around us, and they’re hurting, and they need help.¶

### **B. It Was Gracious Compassion**

His was a genuine compassion. It was a gracious compassion. Look, if you will, in verse 33. The Bible says, “*When he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him.*” (Luke 10:33–34) He came to where he was; he ministered to him as he was. This is what we need to do. We don’t have to wait until they come to us. Go to them.

### **C. It Was Gentle Compassion**

It was a gentle compassion. Look in verse 34: “*And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine,*”—oil in the Bible is an emblem, a symbol, of the Holy

Spirit. Wine is an emblem and a symbol of the blood of Jesus Christ. The oil to soothe; the wine to cleanse. The Good Samaritan bound up this broken man and bound up his broken spirit. And then the Lord Jesus, the Good Samaritan—“...set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn.” (Luke 10:34) He had to bring him. He could not come on his own.

Now before the Good Samaritan met this man, the Good Samaritan was riding. This man had nothing to ride on. But after the Good Samaritan met this man, the Good Samaritan is walking and the man is riding. That is the substitutionary ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He allows us to take His place. He is the One who takes our place. He is the One who comes to us where we are. He is the One who is moved with compassion. He is the One who pours in the oil. He is the One who pours in the wine. He is the One who puts us upon His beast. He is the One who brings us on where we need to go.

## Conclusion

Now, folks, that is what we need to practice. That is what it's all about: being a friend. Next Sunday is Friends' Day at our church, and I'm going to ask you to ask God, “God, open my eyes. Help me not to be one of those folks down there at the church with ritual and rules without genuine compassion.” There is somebody who needs you, friend. Next Sunday I'm going to give as clear a presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as I know how to give. Next Sunday I'm hoping that we're going to have a great host of people saved, because I am not going to be simplistic, but by God's grace I want to be very clear and present the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And do you know what you can do? You can be praying all this week and saying, “God, help me to find a friend, somebody that I might bring to hear the message. God, move my heart with compassion.” I'm just praying that you'll do that. Folks, I'm telling you that coming to church is not enough. The priest and the Levite were religious. The lawyer wanted to justify himself and say, “What a good boy am I! I don't want to love anybody I don't have to love.” They're out there, folks. They are out there.

Now, let me say something to you today. If you don't know the Lord Jesus today, you're one of those walking wounded; you're one of those who's been robbed by Satan. You may be living in a fine house, driving a nice car, but Satan has robbed you and beaten you. Jesus today is still the Good Samaritan. Jesus loves you today, and He'll save you, I promise.†

# Lifestyle Evangelism

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** August 21, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 10:25–37

*“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.”*

LUKE 10:33

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## Introduction

I want you, please, to take your Bibles and turn tonight to Luke 10. We begin reading in verse 25. When you find it, we'll read it together. The title of our message tonight is “Lifestyle Evangelism.” Luke 10:25—I like to hear the pages turn; that’s just music also—we begin in verse 25: *“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Now, right away, he must have not been a very good lawyer, because he’s talking about inheriting something and doing something to get it at the same time. He’s trying to mix grace and works. *“He said unto him, What is written in the law?”*—that is, Jesus said unto him, “What is written in the law?”—*“how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do,*

*and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself...”—and that’s the key to this man’s problem— “he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.” (Luke 10:25–37)*

I have a burden on my heart: it is that we reach this city for Jesus Christ. But I’ll tell you, if we reach this city for Jesus Christ, how it will not be done: It will not be done by Adrian Rogers standing in the pulpit and preaching; nor will it be done by scores of preachers—fundamental, Bible-believing preachers—preaching from the pulpits. The world has been trying to tell us something. We’ve not been listening. Here’s what the world has been trying to say to us: Build splendid buildings and air conditioning, and have a marvelous program, and have a well-trained staff and wonderful music, and then invite us to come by means of radio, television, and newspaper—and we’re still not coming.” That’s what the world has been trying to tell us—and we’re not listening.

Now we ought not to think it strange they don’t come. I mean, after all, do you find it hard to get to church? I tell you, we have to fight to get here. We had to start on Saturday, especially when we had kids, to get here on Sunday. And by the time we got here, we needed to be here, because we’d lost our religion getting here. Can you identify with that? I mean, it’s just hard to get to church. And, folks, we want to come. I mean, we want to come! We love the Lord. What about those people who couldn’t care less? They don’t even want to come. Now, sure, some of them will come, and we’re glad when they do; but the rank and file are not coming in.

You can come to a church like this on Sunday night where 2,500 to 3,000 people are gathered together, and you think everybody’s in church. You just get in your automobile sometime and drive around and see where the rest of them are. Friend, we’re just a little drop in the bucket! They’re out all over! They’re not coming to church. They don’t know the Lord. And we ought not to think it strange that they don’t come. We ought to think it strange that we don’t go.

Now you can read the Bible all the way through, and in my estimation—and I think I’m correct on this—you’ll not find one command for a lost man to go to church—not one! But you’ll find many commands for the church to go to that lost man. Over and over and over again, the Bible says, “Go.” You can’t spell *gospel* or *God* unless you start with *go*.

A little boy got a car, a little toy car, for Christmas, and it wouldn’t work. And he took it to his dad and he said, “Dad, it won’t work.” His daddy said, “What’s wrong with it?” He said, “I think the go is broken.” Well, I think that’s what wrong with our churches. I think the go is broken. We just simply have failed to go.

But, literally, what our Lord said is not, “Go and make disciples.” He literally said, “As you go, make disciples.” (Matthew 28:19) That is, it is to be a lifestyle. It is to be a way of life. Evangelism in the New Testament was not meeting on Thursday night and going out—although there’s nothing wrong with that—or on Tuesday night and going out. Or it was not an eight-day revival meeting where everybody came to the church and brought unsaved people. It was a way of life. Now here’s what made that early church so different from ours and from the average: they were all at it, and they were always at it. Now, you just think about that: they were all at it, and they were always at it.

Now, just look around. What would happen if we were all at it? And what would happen if all of us were always at it? You see, that’s lifestyle evangelism. Now I believe that the message that I have tonight, the little outline that I have tonight, speaks to that, because it tells us about a lawyer who came to Jesus, and this lawyer asked Jesus a trick question. That was a dangerous thing to do. The Bible says he tempted Jesus. He tested Jesus, asking Him this question, “*Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” in verse 25.

Now Jesus, if you ever asked Jesus an honest question, He always gave you a straight answer. But if you asked Jesus a dishonest question, if you had an ulterior motive, Jesus had a way of answering your question with a question. He didn’t answer the question; He questioned the question. And so that’s what He did here, because here was this man who’s coming with, the Bible says, a devious motive. He’s tempting the Lord Jesus. And so Jesus asked this man a question. And let’s look at the question and see what Jesus says. This man says, “*Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” And here’s the question that Jesus asked him: “*He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said unto him,*”—Jesus said unto him—“*Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*” (Luke 10:26–28)

Now the man was a good lawyer. He had a clear grasp of the Old Testament. He had taken Deuteronomy 6:5 (Deuteronomy 6:5) and Leviticus 19:18, (Leviticus 19:18)

and he had crystallized the Ten Commandments. He had just taken all the Ten Commandments and boiled them down. And he'd done a wonderful job. You know, the Jews had taken the commandments and had subdivided them and subdivided them and subdivided them till they had over six hundred different punctilious, little laws that they had. But this man, he just really simplified it. And Jesus didn't fault him for what he said. As a matter of fact, Jesus said at this particular point, "You're exactly right. You're just right."

## **I. We Are to Love God with All Our Being**

Number one, he said, we're to love God with all of being.

### **A. A Sentimental Love**

That's what the law says: Love God, first of all, with all of your heart. That's a sentimental love. And I love sentimental love. Never be against sentimental love. Never be against a heartfelt religion. There's nothing wrong with it. Would to God that we could shed more tears! And would to God there could be more shouts of "amen" and "praise the Lord" and "hallelujah" at the appropriate places!

### **B. A Selfless Love**

And then, not only should we love the Lord sentimentally with all of our heart, but there should a selfless love as well as a sentimental love. We are to love the Lord with all of our soul. Now another word for "soul" is *self* or *ego*. That is, none of me, but all of Him. All there is of me is to be given over to the love of my great God.

### **C. A Strong Love**

A sentimental love. A selfless love. And then, a strong love. We are to love the Lord our God with all of our strength. And he's not just talking about physical strength. There are some of you here tonight that don't have a lot of physical strength. **I believe I could beat Helen Boone in a wrestling match. She's not all that strong—are you, Helen? Not physically. I don't know whether I could beat her; but I think Ken could, anyway. She might surprise you. She might be studying judo or something—I don't know. But, you see, I'm looking at someone who's very strong. I am amazed at the strength of this little lady. Do you know what kind of strength she has? Boy, she has just got it on the inside. I've seen her when she could hardly wiggle or wobble, but she just gets up and gets here, because she's taking the strength that she has and she's loving God with it.**

Now you don't have to have mountains of muscles or bulging biceps to love the Lord God with all of your strength. And you can love Him not only with your physical strength, but you can love Him with your financial strength. Some of you have some financial strength. You can love the Lord Jesus with your intellectual strength. Some, not many,

have some of that. We're to love the Lord with all of our strength. There is to be a strong love.

#### **D. A Sensible Love**

And not only is there to be a sentimental love, a selfless love, and a strong love; there is to be a sensible love. We are to love Him with all of our mind. We are to “study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed.” (2 Timothy 2:15) And I am for loving God with all of your heart. But I want to tell you a lump in your throat is no excuse for a vacuum in your head. You are to love Him with your heart and with your mind. Don't you like to see the combination?

By the way, that's what I like about Mid-America Seminary. They'll take a back seat to no one intellectually and scholastically, but there's that burning fire for the Lord Jesus Christ—scholarship on fire. I love that.

And so this lawyer is right at this particular thing. He says we are to love God with all our being. And then he says also we're to love our neighbor as ourselves

## **II. We Are to Love Our Neighbor as Ourselves**

Now that just brings me to say something else. It's not wrong to love yourself. We have been told over and over again, “Now you're not supposed to love yourself; you're supposed to love others.” Well, friend, if you don't love yourself, you can't love others, because the Bible says we're to love others as we love ourselves. And if we don't love ourselves, how can we love others? Now we're to love ourselves.

Now, don't get me wrong here. When I'm talking about loving yourself, I'm not talking about getting out of bed in the morning and going and looking in the mirror and saying, “Oh, you are so wonderful! What a fine person you are! I love you! I love you!” I know there are some people perhaps who like to stand in front of a mirror and sing “How Great Thou Art.” That's not what I'm talking about. If you do that, you're sick. When the Bible says that you're to love yourself, the word *love* really indicates that you're to care for yourself. You're to meet the needs of yourself. When you love yourself, you get out of bed in the morning, you bathe yourself, you shave, you clothe yourself, and you feed yourself. That is, that's what love means. You're to care for other people as you care for yourself.

#### **A. The Law Demands Love**

Now, the first thing I want you to notice here in this passage is this: The law demands love. You can just take all of the Bible and just sum it up: The law demands love. Love God with all of your being. Love your neighbor as yourself. This much the lawyer got right.

## B. Love Requires Life

But there's something else you need to see: Not only does the law demand love, but love requires life. You see, how is he going to love? It's one thing to describe it, but it's another thing to do it. It's one thing to have the right answer; it's quite another thing to have the right action. You see, you can be as fundamental as you want. You can have all the right answers, and go to hell. Have you ever thought about the fact that when Herod wanted to know where Jesus would be born, he went to the scribes? And the scribes said He was going to be born, the Messiah would be born, in thus-and-such a place. And yet they were the ones that hated Him and demanded His execution and crucifixion. Isn't that strange that they at the same time had all of the facts, and yet in spite of all of the facts, they did not know the Lord?

Now, you see, this man wanted eternal life, but he needed to learn that it doesn't come by laws, no matter how good those laws are. Now, don't get confused here when Jesus said to this man, "You have answered right: this do, and thou shalt live," because Jesus here is only speaking theoretically. Jesus knows, and He's about to show this man, that in his own nature and by his own strength he can't keep the law. No man has ever loved God with all of his heart, mind, soul, strength. And no man has ever loved his neighbor as himself. *"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* (James 2:10)

And what Jesus is doing now is He is in an intellectual confrontation with this lawyer, and Jesus is drawing him out that He might show him what a miserable failure that he is. The key to the whole thing is this man thinks that eternal life is something that he can get by doing. "What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25) This man has the idea that he could justify himself, and Jesus is showing him that he cannot. And so Jesus is showing this man he doesn't have what it takes. Only by theory can a man be saved by keeping the law. You see, the law was never ever given to save us. The law was given to prove the weakness of the flesh. Human nature cannot measure up to the demands of the law.

Now, just put your bookmark there in Luke 10 and let me give you some verses to point that out. Turn to Galatians for a moment—chapter 2, verse 16. We need to learn what the purpose of the Old Testament laws were. So many people who are trying to work their way to heaven need to jot these scriptures down. Galatians 2:16: *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* (Galatians 2:16) Now Jesus is going to prove this to this lawyer here in just a moment.

Then, turn, if you will, to Galatians 3—you're right there in the neighborhood—verse 24: *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be*

*justified by faith.*” (Galatians 3:24) Now all the law was, was a helper, a slave, to bring us, take us by the hand, just as a slave called a *schoolmaster* in Bible times would take the son of a rich man and bring that son to school, just walk him to school. That’s what the law is here for. The law is not here to save us, but the law is here to show us that we need to be saved; to take us by the hand and to lead us to Jesus Christ.

And while we’re still on that subject, look, if you will, in Romans 8:3–4, and you get the same idea: *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,”*—now it wasn’t weak in itself; it was weak because of our flesh, because of our weakness—*“God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,”*—that is, for sinners and because of sin—*“condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* (Romans 8:3–4)

### **C. Life Requires the Lord**

Now, go back to Luke 10. And, you see, here was a man who is willing to justify himself. Now what Jesus is going to show him is, yes, the law demands love, but love requires life. And this man did not have life. Now, the third thing that Jesus is going to show him is that life requires the Lord; that in Him is life. Now, you see, the law says love. Love needs life. And life needs the Lord.

So we continue to read here in verse 29 of this same chapter, *“But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?”* I am to love my neighbor as myself. He didn’t want to love anybody he didn’t have to love. He wanted to make sure he only loved the right people. He wasn’t going to waste any love. *“And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan,”*—notice that—*“as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?”* (Luke 10:29–36)

Now Jesus gave an illustration. And this is the illustration of a man on the way down. This verse says a man *“went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.”* Those of you who have traveled in the Holy Land know what Jesus was talking about, because Jerusalem is on

a mountain. Jericho is down by the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on earth. Thirteen hundred feet below sea level is the Dead Sea. And Jericho is there beside the Dead Sea. So this man goes down from Jerusalem. You see, in twenty-six miles you drop four thousand feet. It's going down, down, down, until you go below sea level.

Now Jesus is using this as an illustration of a man going away from God. You see, Jerusalem is the holy city; Jericho, a Canaanite city, was a heathen city. And here's a man going from Jerusalem to Jericho. Here's a man on his way down. He pictures a man going away from God. And as he's going, he falls among thieves. Jesus called the devil a thief and a liar who has come to steal and to kill. (John 10:10) And these thieves wound this man and abuse this man, and mug him and rob him and leave him there, the Bible says, "*half dead.*" He is a picture of people away from God, headed in the wrong direction, and all of the calamitous things that the devil brings into their lives.

### **III. There Are Three Classes of People**

Now Jesus said, while he was there dying by the wayside, three groups of persons came by. First of all, there came a priest. And the priest looked at him and passed by on the other side. A Levite came and looked at him, the Bible says. He studied him pretty well. Then he went on. And then there came a Samaritan, who went to him and rendered first aid. And in these three classes of persons Jesus described the scene of His day. And I believe there are some of these three classes here today listening to me. I believe all of life you can more or less divide into three categories: there are the *beater-uppers*, there are the *passer-uppers*, and the *picker-uppers*.

#### **A. The Beater-Uppers**

Now there are the *beater-uppers*. And there are plenty of them out there—I mean, all kinds who abuse mankind. The liquor people are in the *beater-upper* business. And if you're in the liquor business and that makes you mad, you come and apologize to me, and I'll forgive you. Liquor people are in the *beater-upper* business. Boy, I'll tell you, I could get on a soapbox now and preach. I'm about to get sidetracked. I saw a sign the other day going down there: "Help Budweiser fight muscular dystrophy." Boy, that gives me a pain I can't locate—and sometimes I think I do. Boy, dear, sweet old Budweiser there for all the little children! Boy, I'd like to show them some of the bruised and battered and beat children who have been beat up by their bleary-eyed dads who have come home stinking drunk.

There are a lot of *beater-uppers*. Pornographers are *beater-uppers*. Race haters are *beater-uppers*. A lot of *beater-uppers*! People who oppress the poor are *beater-uppers*. People who push dope are *beater-uppers*. The world is filled with the *beater-uppers*. And humanity is on its way away from God; on its way as a bound and fallen victim.

You don't have to go far from Bellevue to find a lot of folks who have been beat up, folks. And they're not all just in the slums. Some of them are in the high rises, some of them in the corporate offices. Some of them think they're living high, wide, and handsome; but they're victims. They're victims of this devil who is in the business of beating people up.

### **B. The *Passer-Uppers***

There are the *beater-uppers*. And then there are the *passer-uppers*. I think this is the group that really broke the heart of the Lord Jesus. Here this lawyer was one of these *passer-uppers*, I'm just quite certain: "*He, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*" (Luke 10:29) Not wanting to spend any extra effort. Not wanting to go and dirty his hands with helping anybody that he didn't have to help. If he's got to love his neighbor, he wants to make certain that he doesn't overdo it.

Now the *passer-uppers* are subdivided into two groups. First of all, there was a priest in verse 31. Look and you'll see there was a priest: "*And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*" (Luke 10:31) Now the priest represents religion. When you think of a priest, you think of religion. And there's nothing wrong with being an Old Testament priest. Of course, in the New Testament, all of us are priests. And we don't know anything of priestcraft, because we're all priests in the New Testament. But there's nothing wrong with being a priest. God ordained priests in the Old Testament. But here was a man who had religion, but he didn't have Jesus.

How do I know he had religion but he didn't have Jesus? Well, he didn't care about people. Look, I don't care how holy you are; I don't care how much money you give to this church; I don't care how you can sing or how you teach: if you don't have a love for these people who have been beat up by the devil, I don't think you know the Lord Jesus. I just don't think you do. And this priest was religious. He was up to his ear in religion. But he just passed by.

Now, let me tell you something about religion. Religion without Christ is one of the meanest things around. Did you know that? You give a man religion but don't let him have the Lord Jesus, and you will make him a bigot and you'll make him cruel. The Apostle Paul before he was saved was a religious man, and that religious man participated in the persecution of the church and the stoning of Stephen. He had all of the accouterments of religion. I mean, he had it all! He was a royal blueblood. And if you think religion is going to get you to heaven, I'm going to tell you, dear friend, it will carry you to hell just like that. It was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus.

So here was a priest. He represents religion. Friend, if religion is the answer, you tell me which one it is. Is it Christendom or Confucianism or Mohammedanism or Buddhism

or Zoroastrianism or Judaism or Catholicism or Protestantism or rheumatism? Which one is it? Christianity is not another religion. Christianity is a vital relationship with God through Christ.

Now I know some who are listening to me will disagree with that and say, “Well, that’s what they all say.” But I want to tell you, dear friend, that Jesus and relationship to Christ is different from pure old religion, as such. Now the priest, representing the religious crowd, just simply passed him by. Now Jesus, when He came to this world, came to save men from sin and religion. And many times it was easier to do the first than to do the second. As a matter of fact, Jesus said to those Pharisees, the religious crowd of His day, that “the harlots, the publicans, the sinners are going to heaven before you do.” (Matthew 21:31) It was easier. You see, when a man is lost in religion, he’s really lost. It’s a terrible thing for a person to have a form of godliness, to be outwardly religious, but not be born again. These people are mean, proud, bigoted, arrogant, and insensitive.

I have an evangelist friend who was staying in a home. The church was having a revival crusade. And the lady was a very gracious, cultured lady, who had a beautiful home, so they invited the evangelist to stay there. She had kind of a prophet’s chamber. And he was getting ready. They were having morning services and going out soul winning, and he asked her if she was going. And she said, “Oh, well, I won’t be at the revival service today.” And he said, “Well, why?” “Well,” she said, “this is our day to meet and study missions at the church.” “Well,” he said, “I understand that. I’m certainly not opposed to studying missions. But I would think for a revival meeting that all of the things in the church would be cancelled and that we’d come down there and meet together and pray together and go out and go soul winning together and so forth.” “Oh,” she said, “well, you just don’t understand: missions is important.”

“Well,” he said, “I believe that; but, lady, I’ll tell you what to do.” And he got a little huffy. And I don’t think I would have done this—I might, though; I can’t tell. He said, “Well, all right, you just go on and you go to your little meeting, and you study about all those folks over there across the ocean. But I want to tell you something. I’ve been staying in your home, and I talked to your maid. I asked your maid if she was a Christian, and she said, “No.” And I asked your maid if she wanted to be a Christian. She said she didn’t know how. And I asked her if could I take time to show her, and she said, ‘Certainly.’ And I showed your maid how to be saved. And your maid has prayed with me to receive Christ as her personal Savior. I asked her how long she had been working for you, and she said, “Many years.” I asked her if you had ever talked to her about the Lord Jesus, and she said, “No.” So he said, “Now, you go down there, and you study about all those folks across the ocean, all those lost people, and you study all those missions. But, lady, I don’t think you are real.”

Now if you interpret what I'm saying to say that I'm against studying missions, you've missed it 180 degrees. I'm not saying that. But what I am saying is this: that you can be in a church and be very religious. And you can study all of the things and go to all of the meetings and know all of the answers. And this lawyer knew them all. And, mister, he didn't have it. And I'm afraid some of you don't have it. You think that because you're orthodox and you belong to a church like Bellevue Baptist Church, and you can give all the answers just like that, you're going to heaven. You may split hell wide open. This lawyer needed a lesson. And Jesus said here was a man that had fallen among thieves, and religion passed him up.

Then the Levite came. That's the second subgroup in this second group. The Levite represents the law. They were the custodians of the law, the givers of the law. And look, if you will, in verse 31: *"And by chance there came down a certain priest."* (Luke 10:31) And then, verse 32: *"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him."* (Luke 10:32) Yeah, you'd expect the Levite to do that. "Look at you!" he says. "What a mess you are! What were you doing out here by yourself, anyway? You're not fit to live. Boy, I believe you're going to die. You deserve to die, ignoramus! Let that be a lesson to you!"

You see, that's all the law can do. This man is trying to justify himself by the law. And Jesus said the law wasn't much of a help to this man. The Levite wasn't much of a help to this man. You see, what the law can do is describe us, and the law can condemn us; but the law cannot lift us, and the law cannot save us. Again, do you want a scripture? Galatians 3:10 (Galatians 3:10) and Galatians 3:21. (Galatians 3:21) What I'm saying, dear friend, is that we live in a world that's been beat up; and religion, as such, is not the answer. Getting them to join Bellevue is not the answer. And legalism and moralism and law are not the answer. *If you think that the answer is in legalism and laws and moralistic mouthings of well-meaning midget ministers, you're wrong.*

### **C. The Picker-Uppers**

Then, there's a third group there; it wasn't a group, just one person, a Samaritan: the *picker-upper*. Look, if you will, in verse 33 and following of this same chapter: *"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,"*—do you know what the word *compassion* means? It means "to suffer with, to feel with"—*com-*, meaning "with"; *-passion*, "to feel"—*"and he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."* (Luke 10:33–34)

Now, whom does that represent? Well, I want to tell you whom it represents. It pictures Jesus Christ Himself. That Good Samaritan was Jesus' way of describing Himself. Now, who were the Samaritans? Well, they certainly weren't like the priests.

They certainly weren't like the Levites. The priests and the Levites were the establishment. But the Samaritans, being a mongrel race, were despised and rejected. Jesus was despised and rejected of man. This one that everybody else looked down on, this one that everybody else criticized and castigated, I believe Jesus used as a model, as a description, of Himself. And I want you to see how like Jesus this Good Samaritan was, and why I believe that Jesus was using the Good Samaritan as an illustration of Himself.

Now in the first place, he was out there seeking people to help. You say, "How do you know?" Well, look at the scripture again in verse 33: "*But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.*" (Luke 10:33) Now the others, by chance; but this man comes right there. I mean, he's looking for someone to help. You see, the others came by chance. But not this man. Did you know that when he came, he had bandages with him—because he bound up the wounds? He had oil with him. He had wine with him. I mean, he was out there looking for somebody to help. His eyes are seeking all around—not by chance.

Luke 19:10 says, "*The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" (Luke 19:10) All over, the Lord Jesus Christ, through His body, and since He has ascended to heaven, with this body, the church, is in the business of seeking and saving the lost. You see, not only was He seeking; He was also saving. He came to this man who is at the point of death, and indeed under the sentence of death, and he binds up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine.

Now I trust that you don't think I'm not reading too much into this. Some people say, "Preacher, I think sometimes you see too much in a passage." You know, sometimes I'm afraid of not seeing enough. I believe there is more there than we dream. And these parables that Jesus gave are marvelous stories. And this was a parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. But oil in the Bible is a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God, and wine is a symbol of the blood of Christ. Thank God for the Spirit and the blood that can take a poor lost sinner and heal those wounds that those *beater-uppers*, that devil's crowd, has put on these people.

And here comes this man, this despised and rejected Samaritan: he's seeking, he's saving, and he is securing. He brings him to an inn and says, "Take care of him. Take care of him at my expense. And whatever you spend, I'll repay when I come again." Don't you think he's talking about Jesus? I mean, look, folks. I believe he's talking about Jesus here. "I'll repay you when I come again."

Friend, I want to tell you something. Anything you put in that offering plate for the work of this church, if it's a New Testament church, you're not going to lose it. Anything anybody puts on God's altar is never lost. And God has given to this church the job, the responsibility, of taking care of these people and nurturing them and loving them until

He comes again. That's what a church is. It's not a museum for saints; it's a hospital for sinners. It's our job. It's our duty. It's our responsibility.

Now by this time I think about all the hot air had gone out of this lawyer. I think he had probably gotten the lesson. I think he had seen there was nothing he could do to inherit eternal life. And he couldn't justify himself. And *"by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* (Galatians 2:16) And all of his religion was no good. You see, the law requires love. But love requires life. And life requires the Lord Jesus. He is the answer to the whole thing.

Now I want you to notice not only is Jesus the source of this life; but when that life is in us, it is going to reproduce itself. Let's continue to read—verse 36: *"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."* (Luke 10:36–37)

## Conclusion

Now, folks, I want to tell you something. The proof that a man has met the Good Samaritan, the Lord Jesus, is that he is going to do as the Good Samaritan does: *"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."* (John 20:21) And I believe with all of my heart that everybody in this auditorium tonight is in one of three categories. Some of you are *beater-uppers*. Most of you are *passer-uppers*. Thank God there are some *picker-uppers*. I believe the *picker-uppers* are like Jesus. And I don't see how a man can claim to be a Christian and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ if he neglects the commands of Jesus. I just don't see how he can do it. Jesus said, *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46)

Now we can't all do it the same way. Indeed, our Lord doesn't want us to do it all the same way. There are people you can reach that I'll never reach. They're scared to death of me, some of them. And others of them I'll never get to know. And you don't have to be highly skilled or trained, or have a seminary education, to do it. In your own way, in God's timing, God will make you a Good Samaritan. Oh, friend, friend, friend, friend, listen to me! Are you a soul winner? The way that you can know that you know Jesus—one of the ways—is that the things that break the heart of Jesus break your heart. The way that you can know that the Spirit of Jesus is in you is this: that you love the things that Jesus loves. Lord, lay some soul upon my heart, and win that soul through me.

# The Prayer Life of the Lord Jesus Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 19, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 11:1**

*“Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”*

LUKE 11:1

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and find, if you will, Luke chapter 11. And we’re going to look at a number of verses tonight rather than this one verse in Luke chapter 11 and verse 1, but that’s the one we’re going to begin with. And the title of study together is, “The Prayer Life of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now look up here and let me tell you something. You do not have a failure in your life but what somehow it is a prayer failure. You do not have a need in your life, a genuine need, that proper prayer would not meet and help you to fill that need. Alas, alas, most of us are not successful, however, in our prayer lives.

Now what we’re going to do tonight is to look at the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ, learn from it, and apply that to our own lives. Our verse, Luke 11 and verse 1: “And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”

Now John taught his disciples to pray. Lord, we’re Your disciples. Teach us to pray.”

Think about this verse. What must it have been like to observe the Lord Jesus Christ in His prayer life? What a lesson must have been there. What a motivation to pray. Notice they did not say, “Lord Jesus, teach us to teach,” or, “Teach us to preach,” or “Teach us to heal.” They said, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

I’ve studied the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ and I have found out that with Jesus, the Son of God, prayer was not a nicety; prayer was a necessity. Jesus prayed without ceasing. You see, Jesus, the very Son of God, God incarnate, God in human flesh, was dependant upon prayer. Jesus’ life was a life of prayer. Now I’m going to give you many Scriptures. It’d probably be better not for you to turn to them, but to write them on a piece of paper and then go and study them later, but, ah, John chapter 5, verse 19: “Then Jesus, then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son—speaking of Himself—can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth—that is, the Father—these also doeth the Son likewise.” Now here the Lord Jesus Christ said, “Listen, I am totally helpless apart from My Father. I have to peer into heaven. I have to see what the Father does. Because what I see the Father do, that is what I do. I can do nothing of Myself.” Jesus did not do one single solitary miracle by His own power. He was totally, completely upon the Son of God, ah, upon God the Father, though He Himself is the Son of God.

Let me give you another verse that points out the same thing, this time in John chapter 14 and verse 10. Jesus said, “Believest not, believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” All of the wonderful teaching that Jesus gave, He said, “It didn’t originate with Me. I got it from above. What the Father does, I do. What the Father says, I say.” Jesus had to receive power from God above, He, being the very Son of God. What does that say to me? Ca, can I act independent of God the Father if Jesus Christ, the sinless, perfect Son of God said, “I am totally dependent upon the Father for what I do and what I say? Martin Luther, the Father of the Protestant Reformation, said, and I quote, “As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and cobblers to mend shoes, it is the business of Christians to pray.” That is your business, lady, sir. Prayer is not an option; it is an obligation. One of the Puritan fathers said, “Prayer is my chief work and it is the means by which I carry on the rest of my work.”

Now Jesus had a prayer life. And what I’m going to do tonight is show you the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then I’m going to call you to the same kind of prayer life, because the Lord Jesus taught us to be His followers so we could be His disciples. Three simple points.

## **I. Jesus' Ministry Commenced with Prayer**

First of all, the ministry of Jesus commenced with prayer. The key word, commenced. The ministry of Jesus commenced with prayer. Here's the Scripture: Luke chapter 3, verses 21 and 22: "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized (now watch this), and praying. Jesus being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Ghost descending, descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Now Jesus, doubtless, had been a person of prayer from His youth up. In Luke chapter 2 and verse 49 He said, "...I must be about My Father's business." And His Father was the heavenly Father. Jesus, from a youth, has been praying, doubtless. But now He is beginning His public ministry. He inaugurated His public ministry by being baptized. And before this episode was over, the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him. Ah, Luke, in his gospel, says that Jesus was praying. So Jesus commenced His public ministry in prayer.

## **II. Jesus' Ministry Concentrated on Prayer**

Now, secondly, Jesus' ministry not only commenced with prayer, but Jesus' ministry concentrated on prayer. Concentrated is a key word here. Prayer was not a sideline. It was not ancillary. It was not incidental. It was the point of concentration.

### **A. Prayer for Direction: The Way of God**

For example, if Jesus needed direction, He wanted to know the way of God, put this down, Mark 1, verses 35 through 38: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Early in the morning alone He's there praying. "And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth."

Now let me give you the background for this. It's early in the morning. Jesus gets up. He goes out alone. He's there praying. They finally find Him. They're looking for Him. They said, "Where have You been? Don't You know that everybody is looking for You? Don't You know that there are people who need You?" And if you were to go back and trace the history of that prior day, you would find out that Jesus had been very busy. Jesus had been teaching. He'd cast out demons. He had healed Peter's mother-in-law. He had ministered to the sick. And He was pressed by the crowds until the very late part of the day. All day long He had been busy. The next morning, He gets up, departs, and He goes out to pray. Now others were saying to Him, "Look, we need You," but Jesus said, "No, we're not going to stay here. There are other towns, other places that I must go to."

You would be surprised if you would read my mail how many people tell me that I'm supposed to go to a certain, particular town, a town, a particular place and, and preach. I mean, every week. I couldn't possibly go to all those places. I couldn't possibly do it. God has a will for my life. God has a will for your life. Jesus knew the Father had another plan for Him the next day, and Jesus was delivered from what a wise man once called, "the tyranny of the urgent." There are people who make me think the world's going to come to an end if I don't go to a certain place on a certain day, or a certain city and preach. Obviously, I can't go everywhere. Obviously, I should go some places and other places I should not. Well, how am I going to know? Well, certainly through prayer. I have preached to others this statement, and every time I preach it, it falls back on me and I fall under tremendous conviction. There's enough time in every day to do gracefully everything God wants you to do. Hmmm. Amen or oh, me. There is enough time in every day to do everything God wants you to do.

Now there were people who wanted Jesus to do this thing and that thing, but Jesus got up, got alone with God, said, "What He does, I do. What He says, I say." Direction to know the ways of God. Ralph Cushman wrote these words. Doubtless, you know them.

*I met God in the morning when the day was at its best,  
and His presence came like sunrise, like glory in my breast.  
All day long the presence lingered, all day long He stayed with me,  
and we sailed in perfect calmness o'er a very troubled sea.*

*Other ships were blown and battered, other ships were sore distressed,  
but the winds that seemed to drive them brought to us a peace and rest.*

*Then I thought of other mornings with keen remorse of mind  
when I, too, had loosed the moorings with the presence left behind  
So I think I know the secret learned from many a troubled day,  
you must seek Him in the morning or ( I, let me repeat that).*

*So I think I've learned, I know the secret learned from many a troubled way:*

*You must seek Him in the morning if you want Him through the day*

—AUTHOR

## **B. Prayer for Devotion: The Worship of God**

Jesus concentrated on prayer for direction to know the way of God. Secondly, not only did He concentrate on prayer for direction, but for devotion. And not only the way of God, but the worship of God (coughing). Ah, read, if you will, in Luke chapter 5, verses 15 and 16. And the Bible, I'm going to break in the middle of a sentence, "But so much the more there went a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself in to the wilderness, and prayed." Can you imagine that – great multitudes?

I can tell you one thing about a preacher. A preacher loves crowds. I love crowds. I mean, I fantasize, just, you know, man, crowds. There they are, and I get to preach to them. And here's Jesus with not just multitudes, great multitudes clamoring after Him. And you think of the fame and the honor that was being heaped upon Him, and He was enjoying what others would call success. And in the midst of all of this He withdrew Himself to pray, to get alone with God.

Now there's a great danger in this church, on our staff, in my heart, in your heart that we do God's work and we're so busy doing God's work that we fail to draw ourselves aside and to pray. And our very success could be our demise.

I want you to stay with me in my thought now. We're talking about Jesus not only praying for direction to know the way of God, but praying in devotion to worship God. In the midst of all of this busyness, separating Himself apart to pray. In the midst of "success," and I'm putting that in quotation marks, "success." (coughing)

I want to give you an Old Testament illustration. Now don't lose the train of thought here, but I'm going to go all the way back to the Old Testament to 2 Chronicles, ah, about a king named Uzziah. Uzziah was a great king, but something sad happened in his heart. Second Chronicles 26, verse 5. It says of Uzziah, the king, "And he sought God in the days of Zachariah, who had understanding in the visions of God (now watch this): and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper." Here was a king who sought God, and God smiled upon him and made him to prosper. That's 2 Chronicles 26, verse 5.

Second Chronicles chapter 26, verse 16: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense." Now he's going in arrogantly to burn incense in the temple of God, to do a religious thing, ah, quote, "spiritual thing," end of quote, but he's doing it out of pride. He is serving God in the strength of his flesh in his own will. There was a time when he was humble in his own sight. He was seeking God and God caused him to prosper. But now this prosperity is taking him away from the Lord.

And then look in 2 Chronicles chapter 26, verses 21 through 23: "And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and he dwelt in a several house, being a leper (that means a, a, ah, a quarantine house); for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was king over the king's house, judging the people of the land. Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, ah, the son of Amoz, write. So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings; for they said, He is a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead." Here was a king, a glorious king, a mighty king, blessed and prospered of God, but he got so busy and so proud that he failed to seek

God. How are the mighty fallen?

God has blessed Bellevue Baptist Church in an incredible way, and we have so much, and God has been so good to us. There may come a time when we think all we have to do is announce it and do it and it'll be done. This church, and your life, and my life is so utterly dependent upon prayer. And our very success may be our greatest danger.

I heard one time a story I've never been able to forget. It was about some people who had taken a novice mountain climbing. There were some grizzled old mountaineers who had climbed the face of a mountain. But there was a man who had never climbed, ah, one of these, ah, precipices who wanted the thrill, the exhilaration of climbing a mountain. And so, inch by inch, foot by foot, yard by yard they made their way up the icy slopes. And the winds got stronger and the air got colder. Finally, they came to the near pinnacle of the, ah, of the mountain. And the, the novice was there, and they put him up first. They said, "Let him be the very first to get to the top. Let him have the thrill." And so, the last several yards they put him in the front. And, finally, they, they helped him and pushed him up to the very peak, the very pinnacle. He's standing up there. He stands up and looks around, and the second man said, "To your knees, sir. When you reach the top, the only safe place is on your knees." He was in danger of being blown from the top.

And I want to say to you young preacher boys who are here tonight, to anybody else – if God elevates you, if God lifts you up, the only safe place is on your knees. Jesus Christ, in the midst of all of this, when the crowds are coming, Jesus Christ withdraws Himself to pray.

### **C. Prayer for Indecisions: The Wisdom of God**

Now He prayed for direction, the way of God. He prayed for devotion, the worship of God. He prayed for indecisions, for the wisdom of God. Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 6, verses 12 through 13: "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mount, a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." All night in prayer. This is the Son of God, God in the flesh. You think you don't need to pray? Are you better than Jesus? Have more strength, more wisdom, more ability than Jesus? All night He goes out to pray. "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles." Now what does He do? He's got to make some decisions. Out of all the multitude He's going to choose twelve to be with Him. How does He do that? He needs wisdom. He's going to make decisions. And so He prays all night long before He selects His apostles.

Brother Paul had these committee people to stand tonight. How do we get committees around here? How do we get teachers around here? How do we get people like Ken Reich to come? Do we just say, "Well, he's talented, or she has the time, or, or

that person, ah, has particular ability?" God forbid. God forbid, that if Jesus prayed before He chose His apostles, how much more should we pray? I don't want a single (tapping lectern), solitary person serving anywhere in this church who's not there by divine appointment, a person who is there under the will of God. How our staff must pray. How our teachers must pray. How our leadership must pray. Sometimes we choose lay leaders on the basis of outward appearance and personal preference. One of the worst things that could ever happen to a church is ungodly leadership (cough). I don't mean anti-godly. I mean ungodly, carnal. They don't have the spirit of the Lord. How terrible when the wrong pastor is pastor of a church. Some pulpit committees don't have a clue to how to get a pastor. They look for a person who has certain proclivities and abilities. We need God's man. We need God's woman. We need God's boy, God's girl, whomever, wherever. And how are we going to do that? We're going to pray. How wonderful it is when God raises up leaders in a church. Acts chapter 13, verses 2 and 3: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them, and they sent them away."

Do you believe that God has a will for who ought to teach? Do you believe that God has a will for ought to, who ought to go as missionaries? Of course. How we ought to pray for our committee on committees in our church. How we ought to pray for these who administrate our staff on our church. We need to soak our major decisions in prayer.

#### **D. Prayer for Dependence: The Work of God**

Number four: Jesus prayed a prayer of dependence to do the work of God. What, ah, Jesus was so dependent upon God when He worked. John 11, verses 42 and, ah, 41 and 42: Ah, it's talking about the resurrection or the raising, rather, of Lazarus from the dead. You remember Lazarus has been dead now for four days. The stone is in front of his tomb. "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." Now Lazarus is in the grip of death and he needs to be delivered from death. And Jesus didn't just say, "Lazarus, come forth." He said, "Father, I'm depending upon You when I raise the dead."

I'm depended upon God the Father for what I do. I would be a fool to try to be a pastor, to stand behind this sacred desk and try to preach without an absolute dependence upon God. If the Lord depended upon the Father for direction, for devotion, ah, for all of these things, don't you think that you need to depend upon Him? After Jesus fed the five thousand, He didn't go around telling everybody about the great

miracle. He departed, went to a solitary place again to pray.

#### **E. Prayer of Determination: The Will of God**

I suppose the greatest act of prayer in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the prayer of determination for the will of God, for the will of God. Let me give it to you. Matthew chapter 26, beginning in verse 36: “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto His disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.” Now here Jesus is facing the cross. He says to His disciples, “I’m going to pray.” “And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto His disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. “Jesus prayed in determination wanting the will of God.

I’m going to face some bitter things in life. You’re going to face some bitter things in life. The Christian life is not a bed of roses. Do you want the will of God? Are you willing to have a personal Gethsemane that y, and a personal Calvary, that you might have a personal Easter? The Christian life is not an easy road and you’ll not make it without prayer.

Now what I’ve said thus far is this: Are you listening? Jesus’ ministry commenced with prayer. That’s the way He began His public ministry. At His baptism He’s praying. Jesus’ ministry concentrated on prayer.

### **III. Jesus’ Ministry Continues in Prayer**

Third and final thing and more brief. Jesus’ ministry continues in prayer. He is still praying. Scripture: Hebrews 7, verse 25: “Wherefore he (Jesus) is able to save unto the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Now He died, as Patty so beautifully sang, that our sins might be forgiven and cleansed, but He continues. He lives. He gave Himself for us, that He might give Himself to us as our great high priest. What is Jesus Christ doing in the glory? He is praying. The Bible says, “He’s able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.”

How would you feel if you knew that Jesus was right behind that door there on His knees praying for you? You’d say, “Hallelujah! The Son of God’s on His knees praying

for me.” Well, He’s in heaven praying for you. What difference does it make whether He’s in heaven or behind that door? Jesus is praying for you. I used to preach this text, “He’s able to save unto the uttermost...” and I would say, “That means He could save anybody, no matter how bad.” A little phrase there – from the guttermost to the uttermost. Well, He can save anybody, but that’s not what this means. This means He’s able (tapping lectern) to keep us all the way through. I wouldn’t make it if Jesus were not praying for me. But He is praying. He is able to save unto the uttermost. Now we have a Savior who died for us and a high priest who lives for us.

## Conclusion

So what have we said? The disciples saw Jesus praying. They said, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Now I’m just saying, as we look at the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ, His, His ministry commenced in prayer. It concentrated on prayer. It continues in prayer. He is still praying. Well, what does that say to me tonight? And if I’ve preached to anybody tonight, I certainly preached to myself. It says that if I’m going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, and I’m supposed to be, I’m going to be a man of prayer. Now you might say, “Well, Adrian, that was Jesus. Ah, I’m just human.” The whole point I’ve tried to make tonight is that we see Jesus not in His divinity doing things, but in His humanity depending upon the Father. This is what He said: “As I live by the Father, even so shall you live by Me. As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” What Jesus is saying is, “When you are willing to be to Me what I am to the Father, I will be to you what the Father is to Me.” That’s the whole thing. That’s the whole thing. Jesus is our example in this.

Now there’s a lot I don’t understand about prayer (coughing), and I’d like to ask somebody ab, about prayer. I have a lot of questions about prayer; I mean, a lot of them. I wouldn’t even tell you some of the questions I have about prayer about it might cause you to doubt. That doesn’t mean I don’t believe in prayer. But I just have a lot of questions about prayer. I mean, why should I tell God what He already knows and ask Him to do what He already wants to do? That’s just a small one of the questions I have (laughter).

Thomas Edison said this in 1921: “We don’t know the millionth part of one percent about anything.” Now, you know, Thomas Edison gave us these light bulbs. “We don’t know the millionth part of one percent about anything. We don’t know what water is. We don’t know what light is. We don’t know what gravitation is. We don’t know what electricity is. We don’t know what heat is. We have a lot of hypothesis about these things, but that is all. But let, but we do not let our ignorance about these things deprive us of their use.” I don’t understand electricity, but I’m not going to sit in the dark.

Hey, there are a lot of things I don’t understand about prayer, but I know that God

has commanded it. And I know that one of the great needs in my life is to learn how to pray better. And I want you to pray for me. Now I, it's almost dangerous when I say this, because you're going to think, I have a pastor that doesn't pray. I do pray. I live by prayer. But I don't believe I've even gotten my foot inside the door, really. So you pray for me, that God will enhance my prayer life. And I'll pray for you. And in this, our centennial year, and in a world that's burning around, down around us, we need to learn to pray. And we need to say, as the disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

# The Principles of Prevailing Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 20, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 11:1–4**

*“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”*

LUKE 11:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus’ Ministry Commenced with Prayer
- II. Jesus’ Ministry Counted on Prayer
  - A. He Prayed When He Needed Direction
  - B. He Prayed in a Time of Devotion
  - C. He Prayed When He Needed to Make a Decision
  - D. He Prayed When Someone Need to Be Delivered
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  - F. He Prayed in a Time of Disconsolation
- III. Jesus’ Ministry Continues in Prayer

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel of Luke. Matthew, Mark, Luke—find the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Today we begin a brand new series of Bible studies. Today, we’re going to begin a series on what some people call the Lord’s Prayer, more aptly called the Model Prayer. I think so many of us have recited it, so many of us have read it, but very few of us have thoroughly studied it. And we’re going to be studying that Model Prayer under the general heading “Prayer That Prevails,” or “The Principles of Prevailing Prayer.” And my own heart has been blessed and warmed as I have prepared my heart to teach this series on prayer, because if there’s anything I want to learn to do better, it is to pray.

Now Luke chapter 11 and verse 1: *“And it came to pass, that, as he...”*—and when it says *“he,”* it’s referring to Jesus—*“as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in*

*heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our dally bread. And forgive us our sins; [as we] forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*" (Luke 11:1–4)

Now it's interesting here in verse 1 that the disciples came to Jesus and they said, "Lord, teach us to pray." So far as I can find, nowhere in the Bible did they ever say, "Lord, teach us to preach." Nowhere did they ever say, "Lord, teach us to teach." Nowhere did they ever say, "Lord, teach us to heal." Now Jesus was a marvelous preacher, a tremendous teacher, and He was indeed the great physician; but it was the prayer life of the Lord Jesus that so captured the attention of the disciples that when they had seen Him pray, when they had heard Him pray, and when they had seen what happened when He did pray, they said, "Lord, teach us to pray." They had been watching the prayer life of the Lord Jesus.

I have been studying the prayer life of the Lord Jesus—and do you know what I have discovered? With Jesus, prayer was not a nicety; it was a necessity. With Jesus, prayer was not merely an opportunity; it was an obligation. Now Jesus—pay attention—was the perfect Son of God: as much God as though He were not man at all; as much man as though He were not God at all—the perfect God-man. Now I want to ask you—He had a ministry of three years—how much do you think Jesus accomplished apart from prayer in those three years? How many things do you think He did just on His own without praying about it? Do you want me to tell you? Nothing.

Let me give you a scripture—John chapter 5, verse 19: "*Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself.*" (John 5:19) I mean, that is the Son of God! Do you know what *nothing* is? That's a zero with the edges trimmed off. Jesus said, "I can do nothing apart from the Father." Again, Jesus said in John 14, verse 10, "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*" (John 14:10) Jesus did absolutely, totally, nothing apart from the anointing, the leadership, the power that comes by answered prayer.

Jesus' life was a life that prayed constantly, continuously. It was His business to pray. Do you know what Martin Luther said? Martin Luther said, "As it is the business of tailors to make clothes, and as it is the business of cobblers to mend shoes, it is the business of Christians to pray." Now if you weren't listening carefully, you'll let that just go right past. He said, "It is the business of Christians to pray." Now most of us pray so we can do our business, right? Most of us pray so we can get our business done. But Martin Luther said, "It is the business of Christians to pray."

Do you know what Hooker said—the Puritan? He said, "Prayer is my chief work, and it is the means by which I do the rest of my work. But prayer is my chief work." Now so

many of us don't think of prayer as our work. We think of prayer as the means by which we do our work, but we don't see our prayer as our chief work and as the main business. But Jesus did. I want to tell you, folks, I was astounded when I studied the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have determined more, anew and afresh, that there is absolutely no substitute for prayer.

You know, we can get a substitute for almost anything else. If we lose a limb, we can get another limb. If we lose our hearing, we can get a hearing aid. And, you know, we can get a substitute if we want to carry a message. If a television can't do it, we can do it on the telephone. If the telephone won't do it, we telegraph. And if that won't do it, we can tell a woman. But somehow, we get the message spread. Boy, the ladies will come after me after this service. Just kidding, girls. But we can find a substitute for almost anything. But, friend, there's no substitute for prayer: not energy, not enthusiasm, not intellect, not eloquence, not organization, but prayer. No substitute for prayer.

I don't know whether you believe that or not, but I believe you will if you'll pay attention to the message this morning—because in the message this morning as an introduction to our series of messages on what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer you're going to see that the whole thing was occasioned by His disciples who had observed our Lord praying, and they said, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" And I confess to you, as in preparation for this message I studied the prayer life of our Lord to see what impelled the disciples to say, "*Lord, teach us to pray,*" my heart was warmed, melted, and moved to be more a man of prayer.

Now there are three simple things I want you to see about the prayer life of our Savior.

## **I. Jesus' Ministry Commenced with Prayer**

I want you to see that Jesus' ministry commenced with prayer. I want you to see when Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost, Jesus also had been filled with the Holy Spirit from His childhood. Some people have the idea and sometimes mistakenly preach that when the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon Jesus, this was when Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Not so. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15) Is the servant greater than his master? No! (John 13:16) There never was a time when Jesus was not filled with the Holy Spirit. He lived a life in perfect obedience to the Father. And because Jesus was the very Son of God, the Holy Spirit filled Him always. But at this point Jesus was anointed; He was anointed with the Holy Spirit. Luke goes on to say how God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power. (Acts 10:38)

What is the difference between the filling and the anointing? Well, you see, you can be a Christian and have the Holy Spirit within you, and not even be filled with the Spirit.

You may have Him as resident but not as president. But when you yield everything to Him, and He fills you and He possesses your heart, mind, soul, body, all that you have, then you're filled with the Holy Spirit. But you're still not necessarily anointed with the Spirit.

To see that Jesus' ministry counted on prayer, I want you to see that Jesus' ministry continues in prayer. Now, look at the way Jesus commenced His public ministry. You're in Luke 11; turn to Luke chapter 3, if you will, and let's begin reading in verse 21. This is the story of the baptism of Jesus—Luke 3, verse 21. *“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized,”*—now, don't miss this next little word—*“and praying,”*—just underscore that—*“the heaven was opened,”*—now you might think that was incidental, but it was fundamental—*“and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”* (Luke 3:21–22) Jesus commenced His ministry with prayer. This was the inauguration of the public ministry of our Lord.

Now I don't mean to indicate by this that this is when Jesus began to pray. Jesus was a person of prayer from His youth up. When He was a little boy, He said, “Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?” (Luke 2:49) And don't you know that Jesus, from a child, grew *“in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”*? (Luke 2:52) Jesus had been a person of prayer up until this time. But this was anointed. Do you know what the *anointing* is? The *anointing* is “a special touch for a specific task.” Don't you like that? “A special touch for a specific task.” You see, when there's a special thing that God wants you to do, then God gives you that anointing to get it done. I try never to come on this platform without breathing a prayer saying, “O God, anoint me to preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” I believe I'd rather die than to be sentenced to a life of having to preach without that anointing, without that unction, that power, that special touch that comes from God.

And how our Lord has showed us how that touch comes, because the Bible says that Jesus was praying, and when Jesus prayed, the Father approved Him, the Spirit anointed Him, and the people acknowledged Him. Because He prayed, the Holy Spirit like a dove descended upon our Lord. And Jesus commenced His ministry with prayer. And dare we do anything that we don't commence with prayer? Friend, listen to me. It's foolish to try to do God's work apart from prayer. But not only is it foolish; it's wicked.

## **II. Jesus' Ministry Counted on Prayer**

Jesus' ministry commenced with prayer. But not only did Jesus' ministry commence with prayer; Jesus' ministry counted on prayer.

## A. He Prayed When He Needed Direction

I want you to just study with me now and just lick your fingers, because we're going to look at a lot of verses together: I want you to see how Jesus found a direction for His ministry in prayer. Turn to Mark chapter 1. In Mark chapter 1, you see the Lord Jesus casting out demons. You see Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law. You see Jesus ministering to the sick. You see Jesus being pressed by the crowds. He has a tremendous day of ministry. And then I want you to begin reading with me and see what follows that in verse 35: *"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him."* That is, they were looking for Him. *"And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go to the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth."* (Mark 1:35–39)

Now I want you to see Jesus has had a tremendous day, what we would call a successful day, a big day, a day of achievement. The next morning, He gets up early for His quiet time. He goes alone, apart, to be with the Father. Finally, Simon Peter finds Him and Simon Peter says to Him, "Come on! Let's get to work! Here's the crowd! Everything's ready! Let's jump into the ministry again and do like we did yesterday! Here are the crowds. Are you ready?" Jesus said, "No. We're leaving here. We're going to another town. I'm on schedule. I have a job to do."

I want to say that most of us, 99.44 percent of us who are in God's work, would have stayed there and ministered the next day. We would say, "Boy, things are really going: we can't leave here." But Jesus knew how to get a sense of direction from God. Jesus refused to be manipulated by men. Jesus refused to be pressed around by circumstances. But Jesus got His orders from headquarters; and He knew that God had a schedule for Him, and God had a plan for Him, and He got direction from God.

Now I want to tell you something. Most of us are running around knocking things over, complaining that we don't have enough time, and I'll tell you why: because we've not been alone with God. We've not gotten alone with God to get our orders from Him to find out what the priorities are in our life. And we're saying, "Oh, there's so much to do! I can't get it done!"

I read a little booklet one time: I want to recommend it to you if you see it in the Christian bookstore. It's called *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. Just a little book; you can read it in about twenty minutes: *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. And the crux of the matter in that little book is that so many times the urgent takes the priority over the important. For example, if you're having a quiet time, and a pipe bursts and water is squirting out all over your house, what do you do? You get up from your quiet time to fix the pipe, because now what's more important: time with God, or fixing a pipe? Well, really, a

quiet time with God is far more important than any pipe being fixed. But yet if it's squirting water out all over your living room, you've got to get up and fix it, right? You see? So the urgent so many times keeps us from the important.

Don't you feel like there are a lot of important things that you need to do, but a lot of urgent things keep you from doing them? Don't you do it? I mean, haven't we all lived that way? You see, Jesus refused to be intimidated by the tyranny of the urgent. And here is Peter saying, "Hey, look! We found you! Come on! Let's go!" He said, "No. I've got something else God wants me to do." I'd like to be able to live that way, wouldn't you? I really would. I'd like to be able to know what it is that God wants me to do. You've heard me say it before, and I'll say it again: *There is enough time in every day to do gracefully everything God wants you to do.* But, you see, Jesus knew what it was to have a quiet time with the Lord and to be quiet before the Lord.

Ralph Cushman wrote these words:

*I met God in the morning  
When the day was at its best,  
And His presence came like sunrise,  
Like a glory in my breast.  
All day long the Presence lingered,  
All day long He stayed with me,  
And we sailed in perfect calmness  
O'er a very troubled sea.  
Other ships were blown and battered,  
Other ships were sore distressed.  
But the winds that seemed to drive them,  
Brought to me a peace and rest.  
Then I thought of other mornings,  
With a keen remorse of mind.  
When I too had loosed the moorings,  
With the presence left behind.  
So, I think I know the secret,  
Learned from many a troubled way:  
You must seek Him in the morning  
If you want Him through the day!*

RALPH CUSHMAN

Seek Him in the morning. Early will I seek thee. A great while before morning, Jesus arose to seek the face of the Father, and the Father gave Him direction. And do you know what that tells me? That tells me, "Adrian, you need direction for your life. And if

the Savior had to pray for it, Adrian, you need to pray for direction.” So do you.

## **B. He Prayed in a Time of Devotion**

I want you to see something else about the prayer life of the Lord Jesus: Not only did He pray when He needed direction, but He prayed in a time of devotion to be alone with the Lord. I want you to look in Luke again, chapter 5, and let’s begin reading in verse 15. Now Jesus is in the midst of His ministry. And look in verse 15: *“But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed of him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.”* (Luke 5:15–16)

Now, can you imagine that? Great multitudes! Fame! Praise! Adulation! Success! And Jesus just backs away, withdraws Himself, and He goes out into the wilderness, a solitary place, to pray. Do you know why? Jesus didn’t want that praise to turn His head. Jesus did not want the adulation, the seeming success, to take the place of His love for God the Father. Do you know the most dangerous time in your life as a Christian is? When everything is going good. Did you know that? Do you know the most dangerous time for a church is when the church is popular and has fame and praise? Do you know why? We tend to want to coast. We tend to want to say, “Hey, everything is going fine! Everything is going wonderful! Praise God!” and we fail to get alone and to pray with God.

I want to show you something that just moved my heart as I studied it. I want you to turn to 2 Chronicles with me for a moment in the Old Testament, and I want you to see what happened to Uzziah, one of Israel’s greatest kings. Turn with me, if you will, to 2 Chronicles chapter 26. What a lesson there is for us here! Second Chronicles 26—I want you to read verse 5. It speaks of King Uzziah and it says, *“And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God.”*—now, put a star by this in your Bible—*“and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.”* (2 Chronicles 26:5) That is, as long as he was praying. Do you seek God? Do you long after God? Does your soul pant after Him as the hart panteth for the water brooks? (Psalm 42:1) *“As long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.”* How he prospered! But now I want you to see the dark side of this: what happened when he prospered. Look, if you will, in verse 16 of this same chapter. And, oh, what a sadness it is! *“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God”* (2 Chronicles 26:16)—not when he was weak, but when he was strong; when God had caused him to prosper—because he’d been seeking the Lord, and his heart was lifted up, and he no longer saw a need to pray.

I wonder, is there somebody here who’s got a lot of money in the bank, and you’ve got good health, and you’re a success in your business, and your children and your

grandchildren, or your friends, are around you, and everybody is saying, “Hey, you’re a success”? You had better get on your face before God. You had better learn how to pray. I’m telling you, in the midst of all of this, when the Savior had the fame, the multitudes, all of it, the Savior withdrew Himself to the solitary place, and there He prayed.

And I tell you, my, how God spoke to my heart and said, “Adrian, you’d better keep on spending time with me; and you’d better see to it that your church does”! Amen? Amen? I want to tell you something, folks: The devil knows how to set anybody up for a fall. King Uzziah was strong as he sought the Lord. And God caused him to prosper. Jesus had such a devotion for the Father that the fame and the praise of others was not near as important to Him as hearing His Master’s voice. And Jesus refused to drink the cup of public praise and the cream of that praise, but He wanted to be alone with the Father.

### **C. He Prayed When He Needed to Make a Decision**

I want to show you something else: Not only did Jesus pray that He might have direction; not only did Jesus pray that He might have devotion to the Father; but Jesus prayed when He had a decision that He needed to make. Go back, if you will, to Luke chapter 6 for a moment. Now, begin reading here in verse 12 of Luke chapter 6. Oh, I pray that this will convict you as it has convicted me—Luke 6, verse 12: *“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”* (Luke 6:12)

Now I want to ask you and me, when was the last time you spent a night in prayer? Now Jesus didn’t always pray all night. Jesus was not a fanatic. Jesus had a balanced life. Jesus knew how to rest. He knew how to sleep. And the Bible records the times when Jesus slept. But He prayed all night on occasions. And this was one of those occasions, because Jesus was facing perhaps the greatest decision He would make in all of His ministry. Do you know what it was? The choosing of the twelve apostles, upon whom the foundation of Christianity would rest, because we are *“built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.”* (Ephesians 2:20) And so the Lord Jesus goes apart to a mountainside to pray.

And notice here—we’re reading in Luke chapter 6, verse 12; now I want you to read verse 13: *“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”* (Luke 6:13) Now, do you see it? Do you see that the Lord Jesus spent a night in prayer? Why? Because He had to make a strategic decision. Our church has made some decisions in these last days, and I believe they were born in prayer. I believe that God has led us, and I believe that the God who has led us hitherto will only continue to lead us as we continue to seek His face in prayer

and hear God.

Ladies and gentlemen, you should never make a great decision but what you soak that decision in prayer and let the Lord lead you. You say, “Well, I’ve got enough sense to figure it out.” Well, you’re smarter than the Son of God, more intelligent than the Lord Jesus, who spent a night in prayer. Though He was the very Son of God, had He not spent a night in prayer, He would have bungled the decision. You say, “I don’t believe that.” Then you don’t believe the Scripture. Jesus said, “I can do nothing of myself.” (John 5:19) “The words I speak, they are not mine; they are the Father’s. He does the work through me.” (John 14:10) Jesus sought the face of the Father; and that’s the way He did it: by praying in a decision.

I’m telling you, dear friend, in the time of decision, we need to pray. How wonderful it is when God chooses His workers! Do you know what can cause this church to fail? Do you know what can cause this church to succeed? Let me tell you what can cause it to fail. To have the wrong leadership; to have people who are not qualified, who are not spiritual, who are not people of God leading. If that happens, down we go! Do you know what can cause us to succeed? To have God’s people leading us; to have those that God has chosen. Do you know what our Lord told us to pray? Our Lord told us to pray, “*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*” (Matthew 9:38) We are not told to pray for the harvest nearly as much as we are told to pray for the laborers. We get the laborers right, we’ll get the harvest. Did you know that?

Listen. Do you know what happens when people pray? Acts chapter 13, verses 2 and 3: “*And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*” (Acts 13:2) They didn’t say, “Barnabas is handsome and a good speaker; Saul is a good organizer.” The Holy Spirit said, “I want Barney and Saul. I want them to be my missionaries. This is the work whereunto I have called them.” When a church prays, God calls out the called and puts them to work. And we don’t have people with calloused and profane hands laying hands on holy things and bungling things. Jesus prayed that He might have those disciples. I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, we need to pray, pray, pray that God will lead us in the decisions that this church must make, and that you must make as an individual, and in the choices and the things that you choose.

#### **D. He Prayed When Someone Need to Be Delivered**

Not only did Jesus pray in time of decision; Jesus prayed when there was someone who needed to be delivered, when there were people who needed help. How was Jesus going to deliver them? He did it through prayer. Turn to John chapter 11. It’s the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. John chapter 11—begin with me, please, in verse

41. Many of you know the story of how the Lord Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead—Lazarus, who had been dead till his body had started to decompose four days. And in verse 41 the Bible says, *“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes,”*—that is, He was looking to heaven to pray—*“and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.”* How did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead? Most of us say, “Well, He just said, ‘Come forth.’” But there was no way that Jesus could have stood before that open mouth of that grave and said, “Come forth,” apart from prayer. And He said, *“Father, I thank you that thou hast heard me.”* And, verse 42: *“And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth,”* (John 11:41–43) and Lazarus came forth. Why? Because Jesus inherently had the power to raise the dead? No! Because God the Father had the power to raise the dead, and God the Father raised the dead through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, because Jesus had prayed.

“Well,” you say, “Adrian, God doesn’t expect us to raise the dead.” Yes, He does. Not the literal, physical dead; but if you read the Gospel of John, you’re going to find out that all of the miracles that Jesus performed in the Gospel of John were miracles with a message to teach us a deeper spiritual truth that you and I are to have the power to say to those who are dead in trespasses and sin, “Come forth!” We’re to rescue the perishing, and care for the dying, and snatch them in pity from sin and the grave. We’re to weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen one, and tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

How can I be an evangelist? How can I be a soul winner? How can I stand before the grave of the unsaved and say, “Come forth in the name of Jesus”? Only by prayer. You’ll never be a greater soul winner than your prayer life. You’ll never be a greater preacher of the gospel, or anything else, than your prayer life. There will not be power in your life to deliver anybody from anything unless you are a person of prayer. If the Son of God could not, do you think you can? That’s the point. If the Son of God could not, do I think I can? Oh, if we could only realize how important this matter of seeking the face of the Father in prayer!

### **E. He Prayed in a Time of Dependence**

It’s necessary, dear friend, in deliverance. It’s necessary in times of dependence, when we have a need. And how is our need going to be met? Jesus had a great multitude around Him; they had nothing to eat; five thousand men, besides the women and children. What happened? Read it. Mark chapter 6, verses 41 and following: *“And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven...”*—there it is again—*“he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to*

*his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they all did eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.”* What a miracle! A little lad becomes a cafeteria! Five loaves and a couple of fishes, and He feeds the multitude with them! And then I want you to notice: *“And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.”* Now, watch this: *“And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.”* (Mark 6:41–46)

He prayed before the miracle. He prayed after the miracle. Do you know what most of us would have done if we had seen five thousand fed with a little boy’s sack lunch? We wouldn’t have prayed afterward. Oh, we might have said, “Thank you, Lord”; but then we’d be running all over town telling everybody about it, as if to say, “Lord, I’ll see you again when I need some more bread,” isn’t that right? But you see here Jesus not only prayed before the fact, but Jesus prayed after the fact.

And in this prayer that we’re going to study, He taught us to pray, *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* (Matthew 6:11) You say, “Well, when I need some food, I’m going to pray to Him.” Listen, friend. You pray when you don’t think you need it.

Do you know what I have been convicted of? I haven’t been asking God to give me my daily bread—because we’ve got food in the pantry; we have food in the refrigerator; and so I’d say, “Well, I’ll pray for other things; I don’t need to pray for bread.” Boy, I want to tell you, God convicted me of that. The other morning I said, “Lord, I want you to give me food to eat today. And, Lord, I want you to give me clothes to wear. I want you to give me a house to stay in. I want you to give me a bed to sleep in.” You say, “Well, you already have those things.” No, I don’t. Not unless God gives them to me today, I don’t have them. I don’t even have life. He doesn’t have to take my life; all He has to do is stop giving it.

You know, sometimes we think that we reach a point where we don’t need some particular things. But Jesus, after the multitudes had been fed; here Jesus, recognizing His dependence upon God, went alone to pray. He lived by prayer.

#### **F. He Prayed in a Time of Disconsolation**

Not only in a time of dependence, but in a time of disconsolation, in a time of sorrow, the Lord prayed. I want you to look here in Matthew chapter 26—just stay with me now, because we’re almost finished in this message—Matthew chapter 26. This is dark Gethsemane. This is before the cross. This is when Jesus’ heart was about to break. He was so sorrowful that He was at the point of death. In Matthew chapter 26, begin reading with me in verse 36: *“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And*

*he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.” That means He was in a state of disconsolation, akin to despair and depression. “Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:36–39)*

And the victory was won. And Jesus made it through dark Gethsemane; and Jesus made it to Calvary; and through the empty tomb and up to glory, our Lord made it; and one day He’s coming back to this earth—because He knew how to pray. You say, “Well, that was Jesus. He had to go to Calvary.” So do you. And me, I have to go to Calvary. “Take up your cross,” Jesus said. (Mark 10:21) If you’ve not had a dark night of the soul, you’ll have one. But, friend, I want to tell you something: You’ll never survive your Calvary unless you have a Gethsemane, where you say, “*Not my will, but thine, be done.*” (Luke 22:42) In a time of deep sorrow, Jesus knew how to pray.

I’m just saying one thing over and over again. Are you hearing what I’m saying? Jesus lived His life by prayer. And if He did, don’t you think we ought to? That’s all I’m saying. Jesus lived His life by prayer. And if the very Son of God, who was the perfect God and perfect man, had to pray, do I think that I can live my life without prayer—if He who was the Son of God, perfect, could not live His life without prayer?

### **III. Jesus’ Ministry Continues in Prayer**

What I’m saying, dear friend, is that Jesus’ ministry commenced with prayer. Jesus’ ministry counted on prayer. And I’m going to tell you something else: Jesus’ ministry continues in prayer. Do you know what Jesus is doing now? He has not stopped praying. Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25, says, “*Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,*”—watch it now—“*seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*” (Hebrews 7:25)

You see, I have a dying Savior, but I have a living priest. His propitiatory work on the cross saves me. His priestly work in glory secures me. That’s the reason why I’ll never lose my salvation. Some people don’t believe in eternal security. I do. This one verse is enough to prove it. “Wherefore he is able to save unto the uttermost.” Do you know what that means? All the way to the end. He is not going to lose anybody. Why is He not going to lose anybody? Because we’re so strong? No, because He’s so strong. Because we pray? No, because He prays. I have a Savior, a dear, loving Savior; and He now, as I’m preaching, my Savior is praying for me. He’s interceding for me. He ever lives to make intercession for me. I’m reconciled by His death, but I’m saved by His life. (Romans 5:10) There’s a man in the glory, and He’s still praying. That’s the prayer life of Jesus.

## Conclusion

Now you can understand why the disciples, when they saw Him pray, when He was finished, they said, “Lord, teach us to pray.” May I make a confession to you? You like to hear your preacher confess, don’t you? Let me tell you one of the hardest problems I’ve had in prayer. I haven’t been able to understand it. Do you like to understand things? A lot of things about God I can’t understand. I wouldn’t have much confidence in a God I could understand, much less one you could understand. Just kidding. Listen. I’m glad there are some things about God we can’t understand. One of them is prayer. Why should I tell God something He already knows? And why should I ask God to do something He already wants to do? Have you ever thought about that? If you haven’t thought about it, you’ve never been thinking. And sometimes questions like that tend to neutralize us in our prayer. I want to tell you one thing: I’m grateful there are.

But let me read to you what a man said who’s a scientist. Thomas Alva Edison said this in 1921. Are you ready for it? It’s an amazing statement. Are you listening? Here’s what Edison said. He said, “We don’t know the millionth part of one percent about anything.” We don’t know what water is. We don’t know what light is. We don’t know what gravitation is. We don’t know what electricity is. We don’t know what heat is. We have a lot of hypotheses about these things, but that is all. But we do not let our ignorance about all of these things deprive us of their use. You may not know what electricity is, but you don’t have to sit around in the dark, amen? And you may not understand all about prayer, but I’m telling you this, dear friend: The Bible says, “*Men ought always to pray,*” (Luke 18:1) and, “We have not, because we ask not.” (James 4:2) And will you join your pastor in making this our prayer during this study: “*Lord, teach us to pray*”?

# Intercessory Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 3, 1978

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 11:5–13

*“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”*

LUKE 11:13

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you will, to Luke chapter 11. This morning in James chapter 5 we spoke on the subject: “How to Pray for Your Friends and to Influence People.” We’re continuing that theme tonight from James, but we’re going to Luke to do it. Now what I mean by that is this: We’re continuing to study tonight on how to pray the prayer of intercession. James tells us that we’re to “*pray one for another.*” And I told you this morning, and I want to say again, there is no way to overstate the importance of prayer and the importance of intercessory prayer.

Now James tells us about two kinds of prayer: He tells us about the kind of prayer where we pray to get our own needs met—and James said very clearly and candidly, “*Ye have not, because ye ask not*”; (James 4:2) but then he told us also to pray intercessory prayer not only to get our needs met, but to get the needs of others met, and we’re to pray one for another, that we may be healed. (James 5:16)

Now the Lord Jesus Christ also amplifies this idea of influencing our friends and winning our friends through our prayers, and in Luke chapter 11 we begin reading in verse 5: “*And he said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his*

*journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth”—that is, “as many loaves of bread as he needs.” “And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:5–13)*

Now in Luke 11 the Lord Jesus actually teaches two lessons in prayer. This is the second part of the lesson. The first part of the lesson is the first part of Luke 11, and that part is commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer. It begins: *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”* (Luke 11:2) And many of us are familiar with that prayer. And in that prayer we are taught to get the things that we need; we are taught to pray for daily bread. And there is nothing wrong with that. God delights to meet your needs. And the Bible says, *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19) But we could call the first part of chapter 11 grammar school praying or high school praying. But the last part of chapter 11 is a graduate course in praying. Here our Lord is leading us to the deeper dimensions of prayer, the dimensions that many of us don’t know very much about: praying for others.

Now sometimes even when we are praying for others, we are not really praying for others; we are praying for ourselves. We are kind of like that girl who was praying for a son-in-law for her mother: we are acting like we are praying for other people, but really it’s kind of for ourselves. And again I want to say there is nothing wrong with asking for what you need. But, oh, the deeper dimensions and the higher heights of prayer are where we learn to pray one for another, that we may be healed! And here our Lord is giving us a wonderful, wonderful lesson in intercessory prayer.

## **I. The Subject of the Prayer**

And I want you to look, first of all, at the subject of this prayer. What our Lord is talking about here is praying for the power of the Holy Spirit. I don’t want you to miss the subject of the prayer, because sometimes the story gets confused with the subject. The subject of the prayer is found in verse 13: *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”* (Luke 11:13)

You see, friends, I must have the power of the Holy Spirit upon me when I preach. You must have the power of the Holy Spirit upon you when you teach. We dare not fail to have the power of the Holy Spirit upon us when we sing, or when we witness, or whatever we do: it must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit. We sing a song: “All is vain, unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down.” We can go through the motions, but it equals zero, or worse than zero—a zero with the edges trimmed off—if we don’t have the power of the Holy Spirit upon us. Oh, it is so important that I preach in the power of the Spirit! If I don’t, my words will be *“as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”* (1 Corinthians 13:1) You see, I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. Learn that it’s not just the fact that I may be saying the right thing: unless the Holy Spirit is a part of this, it is of no value. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul said, *“We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”* (Acts 5:32)

So the subject of the prayer is God is teaching Christians how to pray and intercede so that they might have the power of the Holy Spirit upon them, that they might reach their loved ones for Christ. And so in a sense, it is intercession for loved ones; but as we’re interceding for loved ones, we’re also praying for ourselves, that we ourselves will have what it takes to meet the needs of our loved ones. We’ll see that a little bit more in just a moment.

## **II. The Size of the Prayer**

But there’s another thing I want you to notice. I want you to notice not only the subject of this prayer, but the size of this prayer.

Now, get the picture. Here is a man at home, and he has someone who comes and knocks at his door. And it’s a friend that he hasn’t seen for a long time. And the friend says, “Hello there, Adrian. I was just on the way to a particular city.” Maybe he’s coming from up somewhere in Dyersburg, and he’s going down to Jackson, Mississippi, and he just says, “Adrian, I was just coming through Memphis, and I just came by to see you.” And Jimmy is one of my dear friends. And I say, “Well, Jimmy, come on in. It’s so good to see you.” “Joyce, Jimmy is here.” “Jimmy, have you had anything to eat yet?” “Sure haven’t, Adrian.” “Joyce, Jimmy’s going to have dinner with us tonight.” And Joyce gulps, because Joyce hasn’t been to the grocery store, and the grocery store is closed. And there’s not even a 7-Eleven open. It’s a Labor Day holiday, and there’s just nothing open anywhere. And she is a little embarrassed, and she says, “Adrian, we don’t have any food in the house—not anything!” I say, “Well now, Joyce, I’ve already told Jimmy we’re going to give him something to eat. He’s one of my dear friends, and we just can’t let him go without anything to eat. He’s our guest.” She says, “Well, you had better go over to Morris Mills’ house and borrow something.”

And so I go over there to Morris's house, and I beat on the door. Morris says, "Go away! I'm watching a ballgame." Well, it's a little different. We're just imagining that Morris has a lot of little children in his house, and he says, "Go away! Stop that knocking! The dogs are going to start barking. You're going to wake these kids. And if you wake these kids after Mary got them to sleep, you'll have Mary to deal with. Now, just go away Adrian." Well, I'm not going to go away. I beat on the door again. "Morris!" "What do you want?" "Look, man, I've got to have some food. I know you've got plenty of food in there. Now I want to borrow some food. I've got this friend of mine; he has come on a journey." "Well, what do you want Adrian?" "Well, I want four filet mignons, and I want some of this and some of that." And I just put a big order out.

Now really we don't catch it here in the Bible when he says, "*Lend me three loaves,*" because to us a loaf of bread is nothing. But here a loaf of bread was a day's work. And actually, what he's asking for are groceries commensurate with three days of work. Now the size of the prayer: I want you to notice it was a big prayer. And I think what our Lord is saying in this story is that He is using this parable to illustrate that we ought to come to God with big petitions. We are coming to a King: big petitions because our God is a great God. And you know, the Bible says, speaking of the prayer that we're to pray, "*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*" (Psalm 81:10)

And so, away with our little prayers, because our God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we can ask or think. (Ephesians 3:20) I believe He can even help us reach that goal for that money, don't you? I really do. Now that's a big prayer; that's three loaves and a half. And we're just saying, "Lord, we want you to do this because we have a need, and we're trying to help others to meet their need." And so here not only do you see the subject of the prayer; it's not really talking about physical food, but about getting spiritual food for our friends and our neighbors, where we realize that our cupboard is bare and yet we have friends who have needs, and they have spiritual needs, and we are to set a spiritual feast before them.

### **III. The Steadfastness of the Prayer**

I want you to notice not only the subject of the prayer, and the size of the prayer; I want you to notice also the steadfastness of the prayer. Look in verses 7 and 8: "*And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.*" And then Jesus said, "*I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*" He's saying, "If you just stay there and knock on that door long enough, he'll give you little steaks and the deep freeze, too; he'll just give you everything," because, you see, here is a man who just refuses to go away. He knows that he has the need, and he just keeps on asking. This

is not a slight rattle on the doorknob; that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about a man who is knocking, knocking, knocking; seeking, seeking, seeking; asking, asking, asking—the steadfastness of our prayers. Did you know the Bible teaches that we're to continually, steadfastly, come to God; that we're to bother God; we're to weary God; we're to beat against heaven's door? *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* (James 5:16) I'm convinced that sometimes the reason our prayers are not answered is we just don't keep on knocking.

We're like little boys. When I used to be a little boy, believe it or not, what we used to do sometimes in the neighborhood was go around and ring somebody's doorbell and run away before they would come to answer the door. Did you ever do that? Okay, well, that's the way we do sometimes with God. It seems like we knock just one time and before God answers we just go away. We are to stay there and to seek the Lord in steadfast prayer.

The Bible teaches it so many ways, even as we preached this morning on the steadfastness of Elijah's prayer, where he prayed seven times: "Keep on asking; keep on seeking; keep on knocking." That's what the Lord Jesus actually says here in this language in verse 9: just keep on keeping on until you receive what you want from the Lord, or until the Lord tells you He has a higher plan, a different plan, or another plan for you. Don't give up.

I remember reading the story about Jesus one time where a Syrophenecian woman came to him. Now that was a pagan woman. And this woman came to Jesus and she said, "Master, have mercy on me. My daughter is grievously vexed with the devil." Do you know what Jesus said to her? Jesus said, "I haven't come to do anything for you. I have been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And then He said something that seemed so cruel: "Why, it's not a seemly thing; it's not right to take the children's bread and give it to dogs." Why, what if somebody called you a dog? What would you do? You'd get all huffy and go away. Not this woman. "Oh," she said, "You're right, Lord. It's not very fitting to take the children's bread and give it to a dog." The word for *dog* meant "household pet." But she deepened it a little bit. She said, "You're right," but she said, "Even the dogs"—and she used another word for dog which means "yellow, mangy, mutty dog"—"even those kinds of dogs eat the crumbs that fall underneath the table when the children have eaten." And she's saying, "Lord, just a crumb from the table is all I want." And when Jesus heard her say that, a smile broke across His face, and He said, "Woman, great is your faith: and your daughter will be healed." (Matthew 15:21–28)

Now Jesus was not really trying to discourage her, although it seemed so. It seems sometimes as though God doesn't want to answer our prayers; oh, but the Lord is waiting for us to come back and say, "Lord, I'm just going to take a crumb from

underneath the table”—just that importunity, that spiritual audacity that refuses to take *no* for an answer. Not many of us are praying that way.

Do you remember there in the story of Jacob and that angel where Jacob wrestled with that angel, and they were wrestling, and the angel finally had to cripple Jacob? And after Jacob was crippled, the angel says, “Let me go.” And Jacob says, “I’ll not let you go until you bless me.” (Genesis 32:24–26) Now, do you think that angel really wanted to get away? He didn’t want to get away. The angel was saying, “Let me go,” and all the time he was saying, “I hope he doesn’t.” You see, do you think there is any man who could hold on to an angel if that angel didn’t want him to hold on to him? Think about it. See, that fight was fixed. You see, here’s the whole thing: God is trying to teach us a lesson. It’s the lesson of importunity. Jesus tells it again in Luke chapter 18, about a woman and a judge. And this judge, who is an unjust judge, wouldn’t hear her; but she kept coming and saying, “Judge, you better listen to my case! Judge, I’ve been bilked out of some money! Judge, I need you! Oh, Judge! Oh, Judge! Oh, Judge!” And finally he says, “Whatever that woman wants, give it to her.”

Now, folks, Jesus uses all kinds of examples to teach us that we need to storm the gates of heaven in prayer. And you just think about it now: here is a man, he’s not just ringing the doorbell and running away; he is beating on the door. And even though it is nighttime, and even though the babies are asleep, Jesus said, “He will rise and give him because of his importunity.” That is, he continues to ask.

#### **IV. The Sacrifice of the Prayer**

Now, think not only about the subject of the prayer, and the size of the prayer, and the steadfastness of the prayer; but you think about the sacrifice of the prayer. I mean, here was a man who was really making a fool of himself out there in the middle of the night, beating on a door, getting ridiculed by his neighbors. The dogs are barking. Venetian blinds are opening. And they say, “What happened to the preacher? What’s he over there trying to beat Morris’s door down for?” Everybody’s looking and saying, “That’s one of the stupidest things I’ve ever seen.” But see, it doesn’t make any difference to me. I’m not going to be embarrassed in front of my friend, Jim. I have asked him to come and stay for supper, and I don’t have anything to set before him. And I’m going to give him something—even if it costs me a little shame; even if it costs me a little sacrifice.

You see, folks, we need to quit worrying about what the world thinks about us and start wondering what God thinks about us—we really do—and let the world laugh, and let the world ridicule us, and let the world think that we are nuts. Let them think we are fanatics. I’ll just go ahead and admit it: *I’m a nut, but I’m fastened to a good bolt.* And just go ahead and be a nut for the Lord Jesus Christ.

## V. The Specifics of the Prayer

Oh, the sacrifice and the shamelessness of this prayer; then I want you to notice also the specifics of the prayer. Look in verse 5: *“And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves.”* He asked specifically for three loaves of bread. He didn’t say, “Friend, bless me,” or, “Friend, is there anything in the house?” Or he didn’t even say, “Friend, have you got any food?” Or he didn’t even say, “Friend, do you have any bread?” He said, “I want three loaves of bread.” Here was a specific prayer.

You know, I believe that our prayers need to be specific. So many times if God were to answer our prayers, we wouldn’t know whether He answered them or not. So many times we pray vague prayers—and either it’s because of a lack of knowledge—what to pray for—or it’s because of a lack of faith—we know what to pray for, but we’re afraid to pray for it. You see, if we pray for something specifically, and God doesn’t give it to us, then we have to admit that God didn’t hear our prayer. Isn’t that true? I mean, I’ve seen times where I have prayed so specifically that to me it just had to be God answering prayer.

And I didn’t intend to tell this illustration, but it just popped in my head right now while I was talking. One time down in Florida I had a little Volkswagen I used to use to do visitation in. And one day I was going to a meeting to preach in that little automobile, and it just quit running; and it just stopped right there and died beside the road. I felt like getting out and digging a hole and burying it. It just died, just stopped. It had gas in the tank and all of these things. So I sat there and I tried and tried and tried to get it started. And I turned the ignition, and the battery turned the engine over and over and over and over. And finally the battery just gave out, and it was just sitting there, and it wouldn’t start. And I tried maybe for half an hour. I had done everything but pray.

Finally, I said, “Lord, I’m going to ask you to start this automobile; and I’m going to ask you, Lord, that you not start it by some mechanic or fooling around; I’m just going to ask you, Lord, that when I put the key in the ignition and turn it, it starts immediately. And if it does, I’ll know you did it.” Well, that’s kind of a big prayer, because, you know, “If He doesn’t, I’ll know He didn’t do it.” And, you know, “I just know, whatever it is, I’m being led to pray wrong.” Well, this just popped in my head. Maybe it’s a silly illustration, but I remember so vividly taking the key—now, remember, I had worked on that thing for a half an hour, and the battery was dead—putting the key in, turning it, and off I drove. I don’t know what was ever wrong with it, but I believe that God healed my car like sometimes He heals a body—just like that, and it started. But it was specific—so specific to me.

Now you say, “That was coincidence.” Well, maybe to you it was coincidence. It wasn’t a coincidence to me. It was so specific, where I was saying, “Lord, I’m asking

you to do something.” And that’s a silly little illustration, but I could give you many illustrations of where I prayed so specifically and God has answered specifically.

I think many times that when we’re praying specifically like that, it is because the Holy Spirit is dictating our prayers. But I do believe that so many times we’re praying prayers like this: “Lord, save the lost.” Now that’s a safe prayer, isn’t it? That’s a safe prayer, because we’ll never have to admit whether God answered it or not, because every day some people are being saved, right? Yeah. But if you say, “Now, Lord, save John Jones,” see, that’s a specific prayer. And here there’s something about this prayer, I think, that our Lord is teaching. Here is a specific prayer: the specifics of the prayer. It is definite prayer.

## **VI. The Seriousness of the Prayer**

And then the next thing I want you to notice is the seriousness of the prayer. Why was this man so serious about it? He says in verse 6—here’s his rationale—“*For a friend of mine in his journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?*” Now, what does that mean? Well, you see, back in those days there were no Holiday Inns; there were no Quality Courts; there were no 7-Elevens; there were no Shoney’s, and those kind of restaurants, and so forth. People who traveled had to depend upon their friends. And the custom was that if a friend came to you, he had to be received. I mean, it was just an unthinkable breach of etiquette if you did not receive that friend.

And here is a man who is so serious. He would have been humiliated. And, oh, how we need to pray in all seriousness because of our inescapable responsibility! Let me tell you something, friend. Just as this man was responsible to feed his friend, you and I have specific responsibilities. You must feed Sunday after Sunday. I must. And my cupboard is bare. I must go to the Lord and say, “Lord, these friends have come to me, and I have nothing to feed them. O God, I must have the power of the Holy Spirit, and I won’t let you go until you bless me.”

You have friends who come to you. Some of them are in your Sunday School class. Some of them are your next-door neighbors. Some of them are your children. But you have an inescapable responsibility. There are people, friends in need, who have come to you, and in your own cupboard, in your own warehouse, you have absolutely nothing to give them. Worse than Mother Hubbard: your cupboard is bare. And unless you’re able to borrow from God that which you need, you’ll have no bread to feed the hungry. And here I’m sure our Lord is talking about the power of the Holy Spirit presenting the bread of life. O God, help us to see our inescapable responsibility and the inadequate resources!

Look again in verse 6: “*A friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?*” How we ought to make this confession! So many times

we're serving stones, and we're serving serpents, and we're serving scorpions, when we ought to be serving fish, and when we ought to be serving eggs, and when we ought to be serving bread. We're just giving people "stand up and preach," and it sounds good. But rather than being bread, it's like a stone; rather than being an egg, it's like a scorpion. And preachers so many times are ministering death rather than life, because they're drawing from their own cupboard rather than borrowing from heaven what they need. Oh, are you serving stones in your Sunday School class or are you serving bread from heaven's oven? What are you serving? You have nothing. There's nothing in me.

Sometimes everything can be perfect, except there's no power. One man wrote to another man about his church, and he said, "Pray for us here at our church: we're in bad trouble. Our blower is going, but the furnace is out." That's what happens to a lot of preachers. I mean, the sound is there, the noise is there, but the power of God is not there. The vocabulary is there. Sometimes the diction is there. Sometimes in singing, the music is perfect, but there's no power. One man said concerning a preacher who didn't use good diction and good English, "I'd rather have a pastor who said, 'I seen,' when he's seen something, than to say, 'I have seen,' when he ain't seen nothing." And I agree to that. I think our preacher boys ought to use good English as much as possible; but, oh, they need to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit!

## **VII. The Success of the Prayer**

The last thing I want you to notice: not only the seriousness of the prayer, but the success of the prayer. Look at it again in verses 8 and 9. Jesus said, "*I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*" Just underscore that. What do you need? Whatever you need, God will supply. Now sometimes we think we need things we don't need. But He will supply all your needs. The Bible says, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" (Matthew 6:33)

Friend, do you know what we are? We are a kingdom of priests. (Exodus 19:6) That's what the Bible says we are. Do you know what a priest is? A priest is someone who goes to God for someone else. And the Lord left us here. I'm a Baptist priest. you're a Baptist priest. And we're here to go to God on behalf of others.

## **Conclusion**

Now, let's come back to James. James says, "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.*" (James 5:16)

# Intercessory Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 25, 1985**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 11:5–13**

*“I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*

LUKE 11:8–9

## Outline

Introduction

- I. It Was a Daring Prayer
- II. It Was a Definite Prayer
- III. It Was a Desperate Prayer
  - A. Because of Our Inescapable Responsibilities
  - B. Because of Our Inadequate Resources
  - C. Because of Our Inevitable Reward

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles tonight and turn with your pastor to Luke chapter 11. Tonight I'm going to be speaking to you on the subject of intercessory prayer. Now, we've started a brand new course and the theme in soul winning entitled, Love Worth Sharing. And, that program will really be no better than our prayer life or intercessory prayer. So tonight I want to speak to you on how to pray for your lost loved ones. So as to bring your brothers, sisters, children, fathers, mothers, neighbors, and friends to Jesus Christ. The great need of the hour is intercessory prayer.

I begin reading here in Luke chapter 11 and verse 5: *“And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that*

*asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"* (Luke 11:5–13).

Now, the Scripture that I have just read to you is the second part of a lesson in prayer. If you look back to Luke chapter 11, the first part of that chapter, you will find there that our Lord is teaching them what we sometimes call, The Model Prayer, which begins, *"...Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done..."* (Luke 11:2–4). That was the first part of the lesson in prayer. And, then he continues in chapter 11 and verse 5 with the second part in the lesson in prayer. That first prayer is primarily a prayer to get our needs met. "Give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our trespasses, lead us in the way that we ought to go." That first prayer is primarily a prayer for personal need, which is not wrong. Indeed our Lord taught us to pray that way. But, not is He giving us a college level course on prayer or perhaps a graduate level course on prayer, he moves up to another level and teaches us the art of intercession. Not only how to pray so as to get our prayers met—our needs met through prayer—but how to meet the needs of our lost loved ones, our children, our friends, and our neighbors who need the Lord Jesus Christ. And, so here our Lord is teaching us the secret of intercessory prayer.

I heard Ron Dunn speak on this text one time and he's a marvelous preacher. He said something that really blessed my heart. He said, "This kind of prayer is unstoppable." Now, if he said, "It's like an intercontinental ballistic missile." He said, "You can launch this missile and the devil has no defense against it. He can't shoot it down. He cannot stop it." You see he might be able to stop us from witnessing. An unsaved man might say to me when I begin to witness to him, "I don't want to hear that. I won't listen to that." And, he can slam the door right in my face or he can put his fingers in his ears and refuse to listen. He can argue with me. And, he can refute my arguments, but he can't stop me from praying for him. He cannot keep my prayers from being heard. There is no way that the devil can keep this down. There is no defense against it. A sinner may refuse to hear me preach, but he can't stop me from praying for him. Even when they nailed Jesus to the cross, He interceded for those who nailed him to the cross and said, *"...Father, forgive them..."* (Luke 23:34). And, many of those same ones, I'm certain, were saved on the day of Pentecost because of the intercession of our dear Savior.

But, not only is it like an intercontinental ballistic missile for which there is no known defense, nothing that can shoot it down, but it also can have a delayed destination. I

mean, when the missile lands it can explode fifty years later, a hundred years later. Jesus prayed for me two thousand years ago and His prayer is being answered today. He, in John chapter 17 prayed for those who would believe on Him through the words of the apostles. Isn't it great that you can pray now for that one who's going to marry them? In 1 Samuel chapter 12 and verse 23 Samuel said, "...*God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you...*" (1 Samuel 12:23). If we do not learn the lesson of intercession we sin against God and we sin against those for whom we should pray.

Now, let's look at this prayer that Jesus teaches us about right here. Look if you will at the situation here in Luke chapter 11 and verse 5: "*And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves*" (Luke 11:5). Now, remember that Jesus is teaching on prayer. And, so what this person is doing is supposed to be similar to prayer. It is an illustration of prayer.

## **I. It Was a Daring Prayer**

So the very first thing I want you to notice, it is what we would call, "daring prayer." He comes boldly. He comes audaciously at midnight.

Now, what has happened is this. This particular man has had a friend to stop in. He is a friend and he's on a journey. He's come and said, "I need accommodations." And, in the Middle East it would be unthinkable that if a friend came that you would not receive that friend into your home. And, that you would feed that friend and care for that friend. So this friend stops unexpectedly. And, so the host, he looks in the cupboard, there's nothing in the cupboard. He doesn't want to be embarrassed. He doesn't want to be ashamed. The man has come at midnight. He says, "Is there a place for me here?" "Oh yes, come in. You just sit right there. We're going to get you something to eat." His wife says, "We haven't got anything to eat." "Well, you just sit right there now. Honey's going to fix us something." "We don't have anything." "You just make yourself at home." She says, "You better get something quick!" He says, "Yes, yes honey, that's alright. Now, you just make him company." "Now friend, you go in there and you just, you just refresh yourself and get ready." He shoots over next door to the neighbor's house. KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK. The neighbor doesn't answer. KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK. The neighbor doesn't answer. KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK. The neighbor finally comes to the door. "Will you be quiet, listen, it's midnight. It's late. The children are in bed. And, if you wake that baby, my wife will get you. You better be quiet!" "I know that, I know that, but listen, I've got a problem. I've got a friend that's come. I don't have anything to feed him. Lend me three loaves. I need three loaves of bread."

Now, folks you have to understand in that day and in that age there were no quick

markets on the corner. There were no Burger Kings and Wendy's and all of that kind of stuff. Nothing stayed open all night. It was a daring prayer. It was daring in size. He says, "I want three loaves." One loaf of bread in that day was a day's provision. Food did not come easily. He's asking something big.

May God forgive us for our little prayers, because He's able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Not only was it daring in size, it was daring in steadfastness. Look in verse 8: *"I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth"* (Luke 11:8). This man just kept on knocking, he kept on asking, and he kept on seeking. And, down here in Luke chapter 11 and verse 9 when he says, *"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you"*—it literally says, the Greek verb is 'keep an asking'—*"seek, and ye shall find"*—it literally says, 'keep on seeking'—*"knock, and it shall be opened unto you"*—it literally says, 'keep on knocking' (Luke 11:9). This was more than a light rattle on the doorknob. This was a man that just absolutely had to have some bread.

Oh, dear friend, when we get serious with God, when we will not let go, when we will not let up, we'll know the real meaning of intercession. There is no easy way and there is no lazy way to intercede. Why does God make it hard? I don't know, but He does. I've told you before, God has a way of finding out whether we mean business, because God does business with those who mean business.

Do you remember the story of Jacob and the angel, when Jacob wrestled with the angel? You know, I've often heard people talk about Jacob wrestling with the angel. Have you ever thought about the angel wrestling with Jacob. Now, I mean think about it. Here is a man and the angel of Jehovah in a wrestling match. Now, that's no wrestling match. Don't you know any angel can pin a man any time he gets ready. And, yet they wrestled all night. You see, that fight was fixed. I mean, if the angel had wanted to he could have pinned Jacob anytime, but all night long they wrestled.

Now, Jacob was scheming and Jacob knew that Esau was coming. And, Jacob figured, "I do everything I can do to pacify Esau. And, I can't pacify Esau, at least I can run." Because he had a good set of legs and he could pick them up and put them down. And, toward the breaking of the day the angel said, in effect, "Jake, I hate to do this to you son." But, he reached out and touched Jacob in the hollow of the thigh and crippled him. And, now he can't even run. He can't even pick them up and put them down. And, now he's in such a desperate place, in such a desperate state, he gets hold of that angel. And, the angel says, "Let me go." And, Jacob said, "I will not let you go except you bless me." Now, pay attention. That angel could have gotten away from Jacob anytime he wanted to. And, when he was saying to Jacob, "Let me go," he was saying in his heart, "I sure hope he doesn't. I sure hope he doesn't."

There will be times when you will think that God wants to get away from you. There will be times in your life when you will think God is like that man inside that house, where he will say, "Go away. I'm in bed. Don't trouble me." There will be times when God will seem to you like that judge in Luke chapter 18, that widow came to him and said, "Judge, I want you to hear my case. I've gotten a bad deal." The judge said, "I'm not interested in you." She came back again and said, "Judge, you've got to hear my case." He said, "Will you go away." She said, "Judge, I need you to hear my case." And, she kept on. And, Jesus said in Luke chapter 18 and verse 1: "*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*" (Luke 18:1).

Do you remember the story of that Syrophenician woman? She came to Jesus. She was a pagan woman. She said, "Jesus, I want you to heal my daughter. My daughter has a demon." (Either Mark 7:26 or Matthew 15:22) Jesus said, "I haven't come but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24) I'm not going to take the children's bread and give it to dogs" (Matthew 15:24) What would you feel like if Jesus called you a dog? That's what he did. He said, "I'm not going to take the children's bread and give it to dogs." (Matthew 15:24) This little woman with eyes brimming with tears said, "Yes, Lord, that's the truth, I know what I am. And, I know who I am. But, Lord don't forget, the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table" (Matthew 15:27) "*Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith...*" (Matthew 15:28)

Friend, there is a principle. I don't understand it, but the Bible says, "You have to keep on seeking" (Luke 11:9). The Bible says, "You have to keep on asking" (Luke 11:9). The Bible says, "You have to keep on knocking" (Luke 11:9). Here was a prayer. It was daring prayer. It was daring in size. "Give me three loaves" (Luke 11:5). It was daring in its steadfastness. He kept on asking. He kept on knocking. He kept on seeking. It was daring in its sacrifice dear friend. There he is out there really making a fool of himself. Midnight, dogs started barking. And, he's standing there and the neighbor comes to the door in his nightgown. And, all of that. He's and everybody says, "Would you look at that. He's waked up the whole neighborhood." There's a price to pay to be an interceder. Some people will think we are fools and freaks and fanatics.

## **II. It Was a Definite Prayer**

But, not only was it a daring prayer. Friend, it was a definite prayer.

And, I want you to look again and see what he asked for. He says, "Friend, lend me three loaves." Three loaves. He didn't say, "Give me some food." He didn't say, "Do you have any bread." He said, "What I need is three loaves." Now, the reason that sometimes we don't ask specifically, the reason that we pray vaguely is one of two reasons I would say. Either a lack of knowledge as to what God's will is, a lack of faith.

But, I believe that the Bible teaches that there are times that we should come and pray specifically. Now, so many of us just want to pray what is sort of a safe prayer. Just “Lord, give me something” or “Lord, bless me” or “Lord, bless the church” or “Lord, bless the world.” But, now here was a specific prayer. “Well,” you say, “preacher, what does it mean to me. What do those three loaves stand for?” Well, we don't have to guess about it.

Listen, look in verses 11 and 12 and you're going to see what that stands for. *“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?”* (Luke 11:11–12). Now, here's the key in verse 13: *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”* (Luke 11:13).

What is this prayer? It is prayer, Oh God, that I might have spiritual bread. Bread from Heaven, that I might give to those who need. The whole idea is that I have an unsaved friend, I have a friend who doesn't know Jesus. He doesn't know that one who is the bread of life. I need the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost type of bread. I need three loaves. I need it in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. I need something specific. I need something definite. When this man was praying for bread, he was not praying for something for his personal enjoyment. It was, my dear friend, a definite prayer. He wanted soul winning power. He wanted heavenly bread for his spiritually hungry friend. That's the application.

### **III. It Was a Desperate Prayer**

But, not only was it daring prayer at midnight, not only was it definite prayer, but it was desperate prayer. Desperate. Why was it so desperate?

#### **A. Because of Our Inescapable Responsibilities**

Well, first of all, because of his inescapable responsibilities. Look in verse 6: *“For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?”* (Luke 11:6). That is, I have a responsibility. He is my friend. He is come to me. I cannot shirk this responsibility. Would you pay attention to me. Everyone of us have friends that we are responsible for. We have an inescapable responsibility. You parents, you are responsible to intercede for your children. They have come to you. You must have something to set before them. Spiritual bread. You Sunday School teachers, those that are on your roll, those are ones that have come to you and you must have bread to set before them. Those of you who have friends, that work next to you, teach in love. Those people in the neighborhood where God has placed you. Those are your friends, they have come to you. They are your responsibility. No one else can do it for you. You must pray for them. You must know how to intercede for them. You must get spiritual bread

for them.

### **B. Because of Our Inadequate Resources**

It is desperate praying, number one because of our inescapable responsibility. Number two, because of our inadequate resources. Look again in verse 6: *“For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?”* (Luke 11:6). The sooner we learn this, the better off we'll be. In and of ourselves we are bankrupt. Our cupboard is bare. There is nothing that we have except stones and scorpions and serpents to give. Oh how we need the power of the Holy Spirit of God. It's not enough to go in there and rattle the dishes. It's not enough to set the table. I need something. I'm not enough for me to come out here and stand in this pulpit tonight and give you a sermon outline and give you some illustrations. I need tonight the power of the Spirit of God because you are friends have come to me. And, I must go to God and I must say, “Oh God, I don't have it. I never have had it. And, Lord, if you don't give it to me they are not going to get it. They have come to me Lord and Lord, I need bread to set before them. It is my responsibility.”

I am telling you dear friend, every one of us has an inescapable responsibility and every one of us has an inadequate resource. We had better learn where to go to get our needs met because one of these days God is going to hold us responsible for giving stones and serpents and scorpions when we ought to be giving spiritual bread. So many people sit in Sunday school classes Sunday after Sunday and their teacher comes in there with a quarter in one hand, a quarter in the other, and gun smoke on the brain and trying to teach that lesson. They haven't been alone with God. They haven't saturated their soul with God. They have never been knocking on Heaven's door and saying, “God, I've got to have something. I've got to have it Lord.” I've got a friend who came to me and I've got nothing, Lord, to put on the table.

### **C. Because of Our Inevitable Reward**

But, not only our inescapable responsibility, not only our inadequate resources, but our inevitable reward. Listen friend, what He says to you in verse 8: *“I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity”—*that is, his continual persistency—*“he will rise and give him as many as he needeth”* (Luke 11:8).

## **Conclusion**

Friend, you do not have a need that cannot come through intercessory prayer. That cannot be met through intercessory prayer. “Out of his infinite riches in Jesus He giveth and giveth and giveth again.” The Bible says in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be*

*added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). May God teach us a how to pray that we might have Heaven's bread for earth's need to set before those who've come to us on this journey. Let us bow together.

# The Story of Three Friends

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 2, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 11:5–13

*“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*

LUKE 11:9

## Outline

Introduction

I. A Friend to Feed

II. A Friend in Need

III. A Friend Indeed

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Luke chapter 11, please, and in a moment I’m going to begin reading in verse 5. I’m going to read to you the story of three friends. You’re going to see yourself in this story, I trust, and I pray God that He’ll use it to speak to your heart.

This Sunday we began an evangelistic crusade with Evangelist Jay Strack. We believe that we have God’s man. We believe that God’s hand and God’s anointing is on Jay Strack. We believe that we have God’s timing. We believe that the church is at a strategic point. Our Sunday School attendance campaign, these facilities, all that we have and all that we are able to do, seems to be coming to a strategic climax. We believe that the need is great. We believe that we are at a time of crisis; a time, really, of emergency spiritually in this city and in our nation and in our world. We believe that God’s great heart is longing, yearning, to bless. But we believe that the missing ingredient is the power of God, not because God does not want to give that power, but we have not yet met God at the place of power.

Brother Bob Sorrell and I were talking the other day about how to involve our people and how to reach the lost, and we spent hours talking, discussing, planning, yes, and praying. But he said to me, “Pastor, what’s missing? What more can we do?” And I said, “Bob, I really believe the answer lies in the prayer power of our people that has yet to be captured and then unleashed for the glory of God.” And I really believe that every ingredient is present for us to have a mighty, mighty move of God if we’ll learn how to

pray.

The missionaries tell us that sometimes when they go into the woods and into the jungles, the monkeys sometimes will become so familiar with what the missionaries do that monkeys want to imitate human movements. And the missionaries will sometimes get ready to build a fire, and as they stack the wood, the monkeys will also get sticks and twigs and make a pile of wood. But when the missionary lights the fire, the monkeys don't know how to do that. The monkeys can't put any fire there.

And, my dear friend, I believe we have stacked the wood, and I really believe we've got it stacked well. I mean, if you were to see the plans that the staff gave me this past Tuesday, you would see a beautiful, beautiful plan; a scenario of where our evangelist is going into schools, and will be on radio, and we'll introduce him on television, and how the ads are going out, and the flyers and the leaflets. Friend, the wood is stacked, but we need the fire. And that's what I'm calling you tonight to do, and that's what I'm calling my heart to do.

Now Luke chapter 11, the first four verses, is what we would call the Lord's Prayer. Well, let's just read it: *"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."* (Luke 11:1–4)

Now our Lord is giving a lesson prayer. And the first part of this lesson is what I would call grade school prayer. This is Prayer 101—verses 1 through 4: praying for God's glory, which is wonderful; praying for forgiveness; praying for daily bread; praying for deliverance. All of these things are fine and good and necessary, and God forbid that we should ever cease to pray this way, but again I want to say that it's Prayer 101, or beginning prayer, or maybe even grade school prayer.

But then, moving from there, from verse 5 on, He gets into the graduate school of prayer. And very frankly, it's a level of prayer that most Baptists and most members of Bellevue never get to, and it's the level of prayer that I want to bring into this congregation tonight. It is intercessory prayer. The first part of this prayer is personal and for self; but now, beginning in verse 5, He begins to get into the area of intercession and praying for others: *"And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed" I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will*

*not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity...*—and that’s just a big word which means his “persistence” and his “continual coming”—*“because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”* Now the verbs here literally say “keep on asking,” “keep on seeking,” and “keep on knocking.” And then our Lord makes this promise: *“For every one that asketh”—*that is, “keeps on asking”—*“receiveth; and he that [keeps on seeking] findeth; and to him that [keeps on knocking] it shall be opened.”* And then He explains it further: *“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”* (Luke 11:5–13)

Now I want you tonight to enter into the graduate course in prayer. And I said, really, this story is a story of three friends.

## **I. A Friend to Feed**

First of all is what I want to call a friend to feed. Look in verse 6: *“For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?”* Here is a man who had somebody to knock at his door. He opens the door, and there is a friend, somebody he has known, and he says, “Come in. Won’t you spend the night?” “Yes, I will.” “Well, I’m so glad. We’re delighted that you’ve come to our house. It’s so good to see you, old friend. Will you stay for supper?” “Well, I’d be delighted to stay for supper.” “Martha, isn’t that wonderful? He’s staying for supper.” And that time, Martha, in the kitchen, throws her hands up and says, “Oh no! We don’t have anything in the cupboard.” “John,” she says, “can I see you for just a minute?” And John leaves the friend there in the living room. “Yes, Martha.” “John, we haven’t got anything. The cupboard is bare. You’ve asked him to stay. What are you going to do?” “Oh,” he says, “that’s all right. Bill next door, he’ll lend us some food: I’ll go over there.” “John, it’s after midnight.” “Well, that’s all right. Bill’s a good friend. I’ll go over to Bill and I’ll get some bread, and you can fix us a meal.”

Now, what’s the idea? What is our Lord talking about? *“A friend...is come to me.”* Every one of us has such friends. Every one of us has people that if we do not give to them the bread of life, dear friend, they won’t get the bread of life.

Now if you can, get a piece of paper, get it out, get a pen out, and I want you to make a little list tonight for me right now. Write in the margin of your Bible, or get one of those offering envelopes. And I want you to make a list of one, two, three, four, five, six things. Put 1, and write “family” or “immediate family,” if you want to; 2, write “relatives”;

3, write “close friends”; 4, write down “neighbors and business associates”; 5, write down “acquaintances”; 6, write down “others”—this would be the mailman, the girl behind the counter at Walgreens, the person who pumps your gas, whoever.

Now in each of those categories, how many people do you know that are lost, that need Jesus? In your list, is there somebody in your immediate family that’s lost? Is there? Do you have some relatives that are lost? Do you have some close friends that are lost? Do you have some neighbors that are lost? Do you work with some people who are lost? Do you have some acquaintances that are lost? Can you think of anybody in this list that I didn’t mention, somebody somewhere that is lost? And, my friend, may I tell you that that is a friend to feed, and your responsibility is to feed him.

Notice what it says. He says, “*A friend of mine in his journey is come to me.*” God brought that person across your pathway. God brought him to you. I cannot tell you how many times in the ministry that someone has said to me, “Oh, Pastor Rogers, God laid so-and-so on my heart. He is lost. She is lost. God laid them on my heart. Will you please go speak to them about Jesus?” Do you see what they’re doing? They’re trying to shift the responsibility. They’re saying, “God laid them on my heart. Will you go speak to them?”

Now, my dear friend, God laid them on your heart because God expects you to share with them. They are your responsibility. All of us have friends. They have come to us, and there’s no way that we can shift that responsibility or put it on someone else. All of us, if we will think, we have a friend to feed.

Now, will you do something not for me, but for Jesus? Will you take that simple little list of six possibilities and one more time just put a name at the end of each one of those—just a name? And if you don’t do anything else, even if you don’t make a visit, would you begin to pray for these people? Maybe they live in another state, but begin to pray for them and call them by name. For to be dynamic, it’s got to be specific. “*A friend of mine...is come to me.*”

## **II. A Friend in Need**

Now that’s the first friend: a friend to feed. Here’s the second friend, and that’s a friend in need. That’s you, because you have a friend to feed but you don’t have anything to feed him. Look at it again in verses 5 and 6: “*And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?*” (Luke 11:5–6) Now that’s you; that’s me—the last part of that sentence: “*I have nothing to set before him*”—“I am in need.” Out of our own strength, out of our own wisdom, out of our own ability, out of our own persuasion, we have nothing. Our cupboard is bare. Every one of us must admit that in and of ourselves we are barren

we have nothing to set before him.

And so I want you to notice how this man begins to pray for his friend. Now, remember the whole secret of this thing is spiritual bread. This is all a parable. This is all a lesson in bringing our unsaved loved ones—intercessory prayer, a graduate school of prayer. I want you to notice how this man begins to pray.

#### A. A Prayer of Confession

He begins to pray, first of all, with confession of his need: *“I have nothing to set before him.”* Do you see that in verse 6? You know the problem with many of us, and especially in a church like Bellevue Baptist Church? We really do think we have a lot to set before him. We think if they come and see the architecture, the spaciousness of this sanctuary, they hear the quality of the choir or the logic or witticism of the speaker, if they have the warmth of our fellowship, and so forth, that, *ipso facto*, they’re going to get saved. But, dear friend, that is not true. All is vain unless the power of the Holy One comes down. We in ourselves have nothing. So it begins with confession of our utter, absolute, complete dependency upon God. I have to see that over and over and over again, every time I get up to preach, it’s not my ability to explain the Scriptures; it’s not my ability to be persuasive. Apart from the power of the Holy Ghost, I have nothing, and you have nothing. We have people to feed. And, dear friend, we don’t have what it takes in and of ourselves. This kind of prayer, intercessory prayer, begins with confession.

#### B. A Prayer of Urgency

Also, it is a prayer of urgency. Look in verse 5: *“And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves...?”* (Luke 11:5) This kind of praying is not casual praying. It is not take-it-or-leave-it praying. It is prayer that is urgent prayer. Can you imagine a man at midnight banging on his neighbor’s door?

Years and years and years ago, maybe thirty-five years ago, I heard a story that I’ve never been able to forget. A woman came to an evangelist and said to this evangelist in the midst of a revival crusade like we’re going to have, “Can you help me, sir?” He said, “Well, I’ll try.” She said, “I have two sons, and I have lived before my sons. I have witnessed to my sons. I have prayed for my sons. I have given my sons the Scripture. I have brought my sons to church. I have lived a good, clean, pure life. And my sons are not saved. And they don’t seem interested in the things of God. Can you help me, sir? I don’t want my sons to be lost. I want my sons saved.”

The evangelist said, “Madam, would you give me time to think and pray about that and to consider what answer I might give to you?” And this evangelist went and talked to the pastor of that church, and he said, “Let me tell you something. A Mrs. So-and-so came to me and thus and such she said. I want to ask you a question. What kind of a

woman is that woman?” He said to the evangelist, “She is one of the finest ladies in our church. And everything that she told you is true. She is a godly, consistent, praying, faithful, Bible studying, witnessing, loving mother. She is everything that she says that she is to you.” The evangelist asked several other people, and they all said the same thing.

He went back to that lady and he said, “Madam, I believe that the Holy Spirit has told me to tell you this: The reason that your sons are not saved is that your eyes are dry.” She said, “What?” He said, “I don’t know, but the Holy Spirit has just told me to tell you that you need a sense of urgency and persistence in your prayer life.” She said, “Thank you. I take that as from God.”

She went home smitten of the Holy Spirit and she said, “God, could it be that I really don’t have the burden that I say that I have for these, the fruit of my womb, my own sons? O God, I do want them saved. And, O God, I purpose tonight that, beginning tonight, I will pray for these boys like I’ve never prayed for them before. And tonight, I’m going to spend the night in prayer for my two sons.” And all night long that mother pled with God for the salvation of those two boys. At midnight, as it were, she was beating on heaven’s door and saying, “I must have bread for these who’ve come to me in their journey.”

The next morning, she washed her face, fixed her hair, prepared breakfast, and after breakfast she looked over at the older of the sons and said, “Son, after breakfast, would you just stay? Mama wants to talk with you a moment.” The other boy quickly got up and left. And this mother said, “Son, Mama has mentioned this to you before, but, Son, I’d just like to talk to you about your soul. I’m so burdened that you would give your heart to Jesus, that you would be saved.” He said, “Mom, you don’t need to talk to me about that.” He said, “I’m saved.” She said, “Well, when did you get saved?” He said, “I got saved this night. Early this morning I was saved.” “Well,” she said, “Son, how is that?” He said, “Mama, I walked past your room last night. The door was open a little bit. I thought maybe you were sick. I stopped and listened. Mama, I heard you crying. I heard you praying for me. And, Mama, God touched my heart, and I got saved.” “Oh,” she said, “Son, that’s so wonderful!”

Then she got to thinking about the other boy. She went to the door and called him, and he came in and she said basically the same thing to him. She said, “Jimmy, sit down, Son. I want to talk to you about something. You know, Mama’s been concerned. I want you to be saved.” He said, “Mama, you don’t need to talk to me about that. I’m already saved.” She said, “You are? When did you get saved?” She said, “I knew when you were going to talk to Johnny what you were going to talk to him about. And I’ve been out behind the barn, and I’ve given my heart to Jesus. And, Mama, I’m saved.”

I’ve never been able to forget that story. It stayed in my heart for years and years,

because as far as I know, it's not just a preacher story that somebody conjured up, but a real life event that tells me that there are many of the best members of our church who are very much like that mother. You come to church. You believe the Bible. You live a good, clean life. You're doing everything. But there seems to be a lack of urgency in our prayers, a persistency that Jesus called importunity—importunity! God does business with those that mean business.

### C. **A Prayer of Shamelessness**

And so, you see, here's a prayer of a friend in need. He says, "I've got to have some bread, because I've got a friend to feed. He's come to me in my journey, and I have nothing to set before him." There's confession. There's urgency. And there is shamelessness. I mean, it's midnight! The man inside says, "Go away! It's midnight!" But he won't go away. He says, "My children are in bed. You're going to wake the baby. If you wake up my baby, my wife will get on to me, and I'll get on to you. Listen. The kids are asleep." Maybe the dogs begin to bark in the neighborhood. But he won't stop. And finally in the story Jesus told, this man, who was the next-door neighbor, says, "All right, stop knocking! Be quiet! I'm going to get three loaves of bread. I'm going to give you as much as you need. Just please stop banging on my door, will you? Just take the bread and get out of here!"

And Jesus said he didn't give it to him because he was his friend; he just gave it to him because he wouldn't stop knocking. He just kept on banging: confession; urgency; shameless persistency. And Jesus said, "Likewise, you keep on asking. You keep on seeking. You keep on knocking."

You say, "Pastor, I don't understand why God doesn't just answer the prayer the first time." I'm not sure I understand it either. But I know what Jesus is saying. I don't have to understand it to obey it. I think I understand a little bit about it. But God just simply does business with those that mean business.

So many times you'll find in the Bible where our Lord looks like He's not interested. That Syrophenician woman that said, "Lord, have mercy upon my daughter: she's vexed with a devil," and Jesus said, "Why, I'm not going to take the children's bread and give it to dogs"—boy, that doesn't sound like Jesus to me; but it was Jesus. And that Syrophenician woman said, "That's the truth, Lord. You don't take the children's bread and give it to dogs. But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table." And Jesus' heart broke within Him, and He said, "Woman, great is your faith." And He answered a prayer and delivered her daughter. It looked like Jesus was trying to discourage her, but what He wanted was resoluteness. (Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–29)

Luke 18:1, the parable of the unjust judge: "*He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*"—not to stop praying. (Luke 18:1)

### III. A Friend Indeed

A friend to feed: we've all got them. You've got your list. A friend in need: that's us. We don't have bread to set before them. But now, a friend indeed: and that's Jesus. That's Jesus! You see, listen to this thing as it goes on, and you're going to see in verse 8—look: *"I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."* Now, that is, the next-door neighbor, just to get rid of this guy, gives him food. *"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."* (Luke 11:8–9)

And now, notice how He changes; how the master teacher changes: *"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father..."*—I mean, if just a next-door neighbor will give bread because he wants to get rid of this fellow who's beating on his door, how much more is a father going to give bread to a son?—*"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil,"*—that is, the next door neighbor—*"know how to give gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"* (Luke 11:11–13)

Our Lord is not saying that He is like that next-door neighbor. He is saying that if we can move the heart of a next-door neighbor by importunity, how much more can we move the heart of our heavenly Father? And he's saying it's not physical bread that we're asking for; it is the power of the Holy Spirit of God: *"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"* That's the key verse—verses 11 and 12.

And what does God give the power of the Holy Spirit for? *"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me."* (Acts 1:8) All of this is a parable about getting the bread of life, Jesus Christ, to those that God brings before us.

### Conclusion

Now, would you take that list of six names? Maybe you already had it, a one-by-one campaign. Maybe it's the same list. But take that list, and in these days of harvest, these days when we're bringing an evangelist here, these days when we're going to have meetings, yes, I want you to be here, but don't feel that you've done your duty if you just come here and sing and listen to a man preach. We could literally see multiplied hundreds—I mean, multiplied hundreds—of souls saved, beginning October 6, if each one of you will say, "Lord, a friend of mine has come to me. I have nothing to

feed him. But, Lord, I'll not let you go until you give me Holy Spirit power to reach my friend for Christ." I don't know how you're going to reach them: maybe a note, maybe a phone call. It may be a visit. It may be bringing them here to the service and going to supper with them afterward. I don't know. But, friend, these are golden days.

Now, would you get in a prayer position? For some, you may want to lean over and put your head on the pew. Others of you may want to slip to your knees. I don't care how you do it: just get in a prayer position. Now, first of all, would you commit your life anew and afresh to Jesus Christ? He is already Lord, but would you acknowledge Him as Lord of every detail of your life? Everything. If there's any known sin in your heart, would you pray as our Lord taught us to pray in verse 4, "*And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*"? (Luke 11:4) If our Lord taught us to pray that, He certainly means to answer that prayer. And there's no one here tonight who cannot be as clean as the driven snow if you'll pray that prayer and mean it.

And now, would you tell God, "Lord, I have a responsibility, and it's nobody else's responsibility but mine; a friend has come to me, and in myself I have nothing to set before him"? Maybe God is already laying someone or ones on your heart. Would you right now by prayer call those names to the Lord right now and just burn it in your heart—that family member, that relative, that neighbor or business associate, that acquaintance, that other person that you meet in the daily realm of life? "A friend is come to me, Lord. A friend has come to me. It's not Brother Sorrell's job. It's not Jay Strack's job. It's my job. He has come to me, Lord. I'm the one who's supposed to feed him. And, Lord, I don't have anything of myself to give him. Now, Lord, I need Holy Spirit power. And, my God, I'm setting my heart to seek you. I didn't say it, God; you said it. You said if I'd ask, if I'd seek, if I'd knock, it would be opened to me."

O God, O God, burden my heart! Empower my life! I'm not afraid, Lord, to ask. You're not going to give me a stone. You're not going to give me a scorpion. Lord, you'll give the Holy Ghost because I ask you. O God, stir our hearts! Stir my heart, Lord! Lord, you have so many who come to me, and I don't have what it takes, Lord. I know as I stand to preach, Lord, there are so many hungry lives. And, Lord, I don't want to give them stones and scorpions. Lord, I want to give them heaven's bread. And I don't have it, Lord; but, Lord, you have plenty. O God, anoint me as the pastor of this church. Lord, I pray for Jay Strack and Jack Price. I pray, Lord, for our staff and all of those who'll be working in this crusade. I pray for our deacons and our teachers, our leaders, and our people. God, I pray, please, in the name of Jesus, Lord God, please, God, give us revival fire. O God, may we see something happen in these days that cannot be explained apart from the working of your dear Holy Spirit. Lord, for these mission requests that are on our prayer sheet, we lift them to you. For these who are sick and hurting and sorrowful, Lord, we pray for them. We would remember, especially, our

Minister of Music, Jim Whitmire, and precious Linda and Kelly. And, Lord, we pray for the entire families who have been crushed by this death and tragedy, Lord, that you would just give them comfort and grace. Lord, my own name is on the prayer list tonight as the minister for whom prayer should be offered. And, Lord, I pray for myself, and these are praying for me. Lord God, we just pray that you would guard our church. Keep us from the wicked one. Help, dear Lord, our members that are cold and indifferent to be stirred to love you. Father, we pray for our city, for the election tomorrow, that your will would be done. We pray, heavenly Father, for our nation and for our president. We pray for a national moral and spiritual revival. And, O God, we pray for the open doors that you've given behind the Iron Curtain now, that we might, dear Lord, be wise and be obedient. We love you and praise you and bless you. In your holy name. Amen.

# Real Repentance

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 2, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 13:1–5**

*“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

LUKE 13:3

## Outline

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## Introduction

Tonight, our sermon title is “Real Repentance”—“Real Repentance.” I’d like for you to turn, please, to Luke chapter 13—Luke chapter 13, verse 1: *“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* (Luke 13:1–5)

Now, what Jesus said was very straightforward. He didn’t beat around the bush. Jesus said, “Repent or perish.” That’s what Jesus said in Luke 13:3: *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* But the word *repent* has almost dropped out of the modern-day vocabulary, but it has not dropped out of the Word of God. An interesting thing is, so far as I can find, this word *repentance* is used 969 times in the Bible. And the very

first sermon that Jesus preached, as Jesus inaugurated His public ministry, was found in Matthew chapter 4, verse 17, where Jesus said, *“Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* (Matthew 4:17) And the very last message that Jesus gave to the church, contrary to popular opinion, was not the Great Commission. The very last message that Jesus gave to the church was in the book of the Revelation as He gave the messages to the seven churches. And there in Revelation the third chapter and the nineteenth verse, Jesus said, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”* (Revelation 3:19) The first message that Jesus brought was “Repent.” The last message that Jesus gave to the Church was that we are to repent.

Now, what had happened here in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew is, among other things, that a tower had fallen on some people. I don’t know what caused the tower to fall, but they were standing by, and down it came and crushed them. And there was some talk around the community as to why the tower fell on these particular people. And there were some who were saying, “Well, evidently, they were sinners.” And Jesus said, “Do you think they were sinners more than the rest of you? I tell you, except you repent, you’re all going to perish.”

Now, what Jesus meant was that you cannot measure the sinfulness of your life by the calamities that happen to you. You may be living high, wide, and handsome right now, fat, dumb, and sassy, and you’re just getting along just real good; I mean, the money’s rolling in, and your physical corpuscles are hitting on all eight, and you’re just doing just fine, and you think, “Well, if somebody has some trouble in their life, it must be because they’re an old sinner.” But I’m telling to every man, woman, boy, and girl in this building, if you haven’t repented, you’re going to perish. I don’t care whether towers are falling on you or not. That’s what Jesus said: whether calamity is happening to you or not, whether you can see any calamity in your future or whether you can’t, the need for repentance is universal, because sin is universal.

And let me tell you, if you just turn right a couple of chapters, I want to show you what those people in hell are interested in getting you to do today. Turn to Luke chapter 16 and verse 30. Here was a man who was in hell and who wanted to send a message back to his brothers, and he’s talking with Abraham, and he says from the very depths of hell, *“Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.”* (Luke 16:30)

Now, there are many things I could say about the sixteenth chapter of Luke, but just suffice it to say that those people in hell, if they had an opportunity to stand before you as I have tonight, they would say, “Repent, repent.” It is repent or perish. But the problem with many of us is we do not understand what the word *repentance* means, and we have substituted some things for repentance that are not truly repentance. And that’s the reason tonight I’m going to be speaking to you on this subject: “Real

Repentance.”

## I. The Meaning of Repentance

So let's look at the meaning of repentance. And then we'll look at the motive for repentance and some other things here in just a moment. But, first of all, the meaning of repentance. To *repent* means a change of mind. It means a change of heart. It means a change in the way that you live. Now, much that we call repentance today therefore is not really repentance. Repentance is more than conviction of sin. It takes conviction of sin for you to repent, but repentance is more than conviction of sin.

You remember there in Acts chapter 24 where Paul preached to Felix, and the Bible says that Felix trembled, but he did not repent? He was like a leaf shaken by the wind. And though he was convicted of his sin, he did not repent. You say, “That’s right. It takes more than conviction of sin. It also takes confession of sin.” No. Repentance is more than a confession of sin. Now you must confess your sin in order to repent; but that, dear friend, is not repentance, if that’s all there is to it.

### A. Examples of False Repentance

I want us to do a little Bible study under the heading of the confession of sin, and I want to show you something amazing. I’m going to take you through four or five characters in the Bible who used this phrase, “I have sinned.” And I want to show you in every instance where even though those people were convicted of their sin, and even though those people confessed their sin, they did not have true repentance.

#### 1. The Horrified Confession of Pharaoh

For example, I want you to turn to the book of Exodus with me and let’s just do this. It will be a good Bible drill. Turn to Exodus chapter 9 for a moment. And there I want you to see old Pharaoh as the plagues were coming into the land of Egypt. I want you to see what Pharaoh said in Exodus chapter 9 and verse 22: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail. And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned...”*—oh, it sounds so good. It sounds like old Pharaoh is about to get right with God, doesn’t it?—“I have

*sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.*" (Exodus 9:22–28)

This is what I call the horrified confession. Here in a moment of horror, the thunder is booming, the lightning is flashing, the hail is crashing, and the fire is running along the ground. And when Pharaoh sees all of this, he comes to Moses and he says, *"I have sinned."* But did he repent? Well, let's just find out how long his attitude lasted.

Look, if you will, in chapter 9 and verse 34: *"And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and he hardened his heart."* (Exodus 9:34) The so-called repentance that was born in the storm died in the calm.

I cannot tell you how many people I have talked to in my study whose marriage is about on the rocks. I've seen men come into my study and weep and cry with great big tears and say, "Oh, Brother Rogers, I've done wrong. I've sinned. This is what I've done, and that's what I've done. Oh, I need to get my home back together. I need to get my children back together." And no sooner did the home and the children get back together than that rascal goes right back to the same old way. He hasn't repented. There's no repentance there. He may have confessed his sin, but that's not repentance. He may have been convicted of his sin, but that is not repentance.

## **2. The Hypocritical Confession of Balaam**

There was the horrified confession of Pharaoh. I want you to notice the hypocritical confession of Balaam. Turn now to the book of Numbers chapter 22 for just a moment. Balaam was one of the strangest characters in all of the Bible. Balaam was an Old Testament prophet. And Balaam was given a contract to put a curse on Israel. And Balaam knew that he couldn't do it, because he was a prophet for Jehovah God; but he wanted to do it, because it was quite a lucrative contract if he'd just simply put a curse on Israel. And so he tried to do it anyway. He just tried to get God's permission to do what he knew that God wanted him not to do. And so, Balaam was sort of a double-minded man. He was a guy who ran with the hare and hunted with the hound. He was a marvelous prophet. He had the voice of an angel, but he had the soul of a devil. And he was sort of a double-minded man. And I want you to notice when he got into real trouble. I'm reading here in Numbers chapter 22 and verse 34: *"And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me; now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."* (Numbers 22:34)

Now this so-called repentance of Balaam's was not true repentance. Balaam was a hypocrite. He wanted to serve God on the one hand, but he wanted the payoff on the other hand; and he was a double-minded man. And the Bible says, *"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."* (James 1:8)

Do you know what a man is when he's unstable in his mind? That's a form of insanity. Did you know what the Bible says about Balaam in 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 16? The Bible speaks of the madness of the prophet, the insanity of the prophet. Here was a man who was so double-minded that it affected his mental equilibrium.

Let me tell you something. I'm talking to some people right here tonight in this auditorium who are members of this church, whose name is on this church roll, and you've walked down the aisle of this church, and you've given your hand to your pastor and said that you were giving your heart to Jesus Christ, and yet you're double-minded. You came down here and you said, "I'm a sinner and I'm trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to save me," but you never really repented. And you've got one foot firmly planted in the world and one foot firmly planted in the church. You're double-minded in all of your ways. You've got too much of Christianity in you to keep you from being happy in the world and too much of the world in you to keep you from being happy in Christ and the church. And you're so unstable that you're going to end up, if you're not careful, in a mental institution, because you'll not cut loose and serve God with all of your heart.

Balaam said, "I have sinned," but he didn't really mean it. He was a hypocrite. That is the hypocritical confession. I pity the man who is too weak to serve God and too much of a coward to serve the devil. He just hung out in the middle. That's not repentance. That is hypocrisy.

### **3. The Halfhearted Confession of Saul**

I want to show you another so-called confession. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 15 here in the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel chapter 15, you have the confession of Saul. Now, Saul was the king of Israel, and God gave Saul a command to exterminate the Amalekites, to put them and their cattle and everything to death, because, as we preached before, God had a perpetual warfare with Esau and his kinfolk, and the Amalekite was one of the kinfolks of Esau. But I read here now in 1 Samuel chapter 15 and verse 24: "*And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned...*"—it sounds so good, doesn't it? There's that same phrase again—"*I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.*" (1 Samuel 15:24–25) But you'll find out that God did not hear Saul's prayer, and God did not accept Saul, because God knew that Saul's confession was a halfhearted confession.

Now, what his confession was when he said "*I have sinned*" was a confession with an excuse. It was with an alibi. Now, Samuel said to Saul, "Saul, God told you to put all of the sheep and all of the cattle to death. Have you done it?" Saul said, "Yes, I've just kept the word of the Lord." And Samuel said, "Then what does the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen mean that I hear? Why did you keep this cattle? Why did you

spare those sheep?” “Oh,” he said, “well, I spared those to give them to the Lord. I was going to sacrifice them to the Lord.” That sounds so good, doesn’t it? But God said that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. It is better to obey than to sacrifice. (1 Samuel 15:13–23) Now, the problem with Saul was that he never really thought he was guilty. His confession, when he said, “I have sinned,” was a confession with an excuse. It was a confession with an alibi. And what Saul did sounded so reasonable. It sounded so sensible. It sounded so logical. It sounded so economical.

Have you ever come to God and said, “Well, Lord, I have sinned, but here’s the reason why. Sure, I stepped out on my wife; but, you know, she really wasn’t paying me enough attention. She was kind of cold and frigid to me,” you know. Or, “I know I got drunk; but, Lord, you know, it’s been so hard down there at the job. They’ve just been riding me,” and so forth. You see, that’s exactly what Saul did. He said he had sinned, but he never really felt guilty over it. It was an admission of sin, but not really a confession of sin.

From time immemorial men have been trying to give some excuse for their sin. You know, they’ve got a vile temper, and they say, “Well, you know, I’m just a redhead. It runs in my family.” Or, “I’ll admit that I’m fat; but it’s a glandular problem, not overeating.” Or, “I’ll admit that I did wrong, but I was in the wrong crowd.” Sin with an alibi. Sin with an excuse. There is one thing that God will not accept for sin, and it is an alibi, an excuse. And you can use these words on your lips.

#### **4. The Hemmed-Up Confession of Achan**

We’ve already seen three people. There was the horrified confession of Pharaoh. There was the hypocritical confession of Balaam. There was the half-hearted confession of Saul. I want you to see another confession of sin. Turn to the book of Joshua chapter 7. In Joshua chapter 7, I want you to read with me beginning in verse 20: *“And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned...”*—there are the same words. It’s amazing, isn’t it?—*“Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.”* (Joshua 7:20) And then he confessed his sin to Joshua. And I want you to see what happened to this man. Look in verse 25: *“And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.”* (Joshua 7:25)

Now, here was a man named Achan who stole some things that belonged to the treasury of the Lord. And he brought them and he buried them in his tent. And because he had sinned and taken these things that the Bible called the accursed things and had hidden them in his tent, the whole army of Israel was defeated and failed ignominiously on the field of battle. And they drew lots to find out who the guilty person was. And one by one the people were eliminated until finally the lot fell on this man Achan. And the

finger of God was upon him. And there was no way that he could escape. And when he came to that place where the onus was on him, where there was no way that he could get out of it, he then said, *“I have sinned.”* It’s what I call a hemmed-up confession. And, friend, I want to tell you it was too late when God had to hem him up. When God had to put him in a corner to make him confess, it was too late.

Now, let me tell you there are some of you who are going to confess your sin to God, but it’s going to be too late. You know, the Bible says, *“As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself unto God.”* (Romans 14:11–12) There’s not a person in this room who will not repent here or else face God at the judgment and bow his head and say, “I have sinned.” But then it’s going to be too late.

When I was a little boy, my daddy told me, “Adrian, don’t you get in that road. If you do, you’re going to get a spanking.” And I got in the road, and my brother told on me, the ruffian. He told on me, my older brother. I was upstairs. We lived in a two-storied house. And I heard my brother telling my daddy that Adrian had been playing in the road. And I heard my daddy call, and I didn’t answer. He called again, and I didn’t answer. And by the tone of his voice by then, I didn’t want to answer. And he said to my brother, “Where is he?” And my brother said, “He’s here somewhere in the house.” My dad had a way of taking off his belt. And he started calling me, and I could hear him downstairs going in this room and this room and this room. I was upstairs in the bedroom, and I got under the bed. Then I heard my dad coming up the stairs one foot at a time—*clump, clump, clump*. I heard him go in my brother’s bedroom: “Adrian!” I heard him go in the bathroom. Then he came into the bedroom where I was under the bed and looked in the closet: “Adrian!” I knew the jig was up, so I came out from under the bed, and I said, “Dad, I want to tell you something.” I said, “Do you remember where you told me that if I ever did anything wrong and I came to you and confessed it you might not spank me?”

Now, do you think I got out of getting a spanking? If you do, you believe in the tooth fairy. I got one of the worst ones I ever got. Now, the only reason I confessed was I was just hemmed up. I was just put in a corner. There was no way out. One of these days, every knee will bow. One of these days, every tongue shall confess. Here was old Achan, and he confessed his sin to God, but after the lot had fallen on him.

But the interesting thing, whether it was the horrified confession of old Pharaoh, whether it was the half-hearted confession of old Saul, whether it was the hypocritical confession of old Balaam, whether it was the hemmed-up confession of Achan, all of them used these words and it sounded so good: *“I have sinned.”* But as you study the context, not a one of them enjoyed real repentance.

Now, what I’m saying is that repentance therefore is more than a conviction of sin. Repentance is more than a confession of sin. You say, “That’s right, Brother Rogers, I

know what's needed: you have to be sorry for your sin before you repent." Indeed, you do, but repentance is more than a contrition for sin. I want you to look, if you will, please, here in the Scripture in 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 10. The Bible says, "*For godly sorrow worketh repentance*"—"godly sorrow worketh repentance." (2 Corinthians 7:10) That means that godly sorrow is not repentance; it brings you to repentance. You may be brokenhearted over your sin and still have not repented, because that is not real repentance. There must be that conviction of sin. There must be that confession of sin. There must be that contrition for sin. But that is not repentance.

## **B. True Repentance**

What is repentance? Repentance, ladies and gentlemen, is a divine change of mind concerning your sin. Not only must you be broken over your sin; you must be broken from your sin. You know what's wrong with many of us? We walked down the aisle of some church. We wept some crocodile tears. We've taken the hand of some pastor. We've gone through the rites and the ritual of baptism. But there has never been a change of heart. There has never been divine repentance. And I don't care whose church you're a member of, if there hasn't been a change in your heart, you're going to die and go to hell, for the Bible says, "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" (Luke 13:3, 5)

Now, repentance, this change of mind, has both a positive and a negative side to it. The Bible speaks in Acts chapter 20 and verse 21 of "*repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Acts 20:21) And the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 9, that those people at Thessalonica "*turned to God from idols.*" (1 Thessalonians 1:9) Now, repentance is a turning, a turning around, a change of mind. And the negative part of it is that you turn from wrong. But the positive part of it is that you turn to God. Now, if you turn from wrong without turning to God, you haven't really turned from wrong, because you've just turned to another wrong. But if you turn to God without turning from wrong, you've never really turned to God, because you cannot come to God without turning your back on sin. The negative side, therefore, is turning from sin. The positive side is turning to God. Repentance means that there is a change of mind about your sin, negative and positive. It is the heads and tails of the same thing.

Now I've heard some people criticize the Four Spiritual Laws booklet. And they criticize the Four Spiritual Laws booklet, especially the earlier edition, because the later editions do use the word *repentance*. But if my memory serves me correctly, the earlier edition of the Four Spiritual Laws booklet did not use the word *repentance*. Friend, you don't have to use the word *repentance* to lead a person to Jesus. But a person must repent. It's interesting to note that in the entire Gospel of John the word *repentance* is not used anywhere. You will not find the word *repentance* used in the Gospel of John.

But the Gospel of John says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16)

Now, what am I saying? I am saying that when a person totally believes in God, he has repented. And when a person has repented, he has believed in God. *Faith and repentance are heads and tails of the same coin.* Don't think that faith and repentance are different things. They are the positive and the negative side of the same coin of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when I say that you have to repent therefore in order to be saved, I do not mean that you have to quit all of your meanness in order to be saved. You have to be saved in order to quit all your meanness. I do not mean that if you can get your life straightened out, if you can live good enough, that God will save you. But I do mean that in your heart of hearts there has to be an attitude that says, “I'm sick and tired of this sin. And with all of my heart, as much as in me is, I turn from it to Jesus.” Has there been that kind of an attitude in your heart? Has there been a time, dear friend, not only when you were convicted of your sin, and not only that you confessed your sin, and not only were you contrite over your sin, but when you turned from your sin by an act of your will, by faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ? *“Except ye repent, ye shall...likewise perish.”* It must be a wholehearted turning to the Lord, not a halfhearted change. Ezekiel chapter 14, verse 6: *“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.”* (Ezekiel 14:6)

What woman wants to be married to a man who says, “Well, I'll be ninety-five percent faithful to you?” Will Jesus receive us if we'll say, “Jesus, I'll repent from most of my sin?” Has there ever been a change and a wholehearted change where you completely, one hundred percent, said, “I turn from everything I know to be wrong, and I turn to you, Lord Jesus, and receive all that you have for me”? If not, my dear friend, as I understand the Bible, you've never repented. And if you've never repented, you're going to die and go to hell. Hell is going to be filled with baptized church members who traipse down the aisle and take the hand of some pastor and go through the ritual, but they have never repented. And, oh, they said, “Yes, I'm a sinner.” So did Pharaoh. So did Saul. So did Balaam. So did Judas. They all said, “I've sinned.”

But more than a confession of sin, is there that conversion from sin? Have you changed? Not only been broken over your sin, but then broken from your sin. The Bible says, *“Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21)

I heard about a little girl who said, “Lord, make me good—not too good, just good enough not to get a spanking.” I'm afraid that's what some church members have done,

but they have never really repented.

## II. The Motive for Repentance

Now, that is the meaning of repentance: conviction, contrition, confession, conversion. That's repentance. It is a change of mind. Now, secondly, let me give you the motive for repentance. We've talked about the meaning. Now, let's talk about the motive. Here's the motive for repentance—and I want to mention three of them.

### A. The Command of Christ

Number one: the command of Christ. In Acts 17, verse 30, the Bible says that God *“commandeth all men every where to repent.”* (Acts 17:30) There is a command of the Lord. Why does God command us all to repent? Because we're all sinners. And the rich man is a poor man until he repents. The moral man is a wicked man until he repents. The educated man is a foolish man until he repents. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23)

### B. The Call of Conscience

But not only is there the command of Christ. I want to give you another reason for repenting. It is the call of conscience—the call of conscience. Your poor heart will never find rest and your conscience will never be at ease until you repent. Listen to this scripture in Isaiah chapter 57 and verse 20: *“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”* (Isaiah 57:20–21)

Do you want real peace? Get your heart right with God. Repent. Your conscience is crying out. You need rest. So many people today in the city of Memphis and around the world just have a sea—a seething, boiling sea—within them. And they may go to some counselor. They may go to some psychologist. They may go to some psychiatrist. And he may say, “Oh, your guilt gland is overworking. Maybe you've got a guilt complex.” No, you don't. Friend, it's not a complex. You're guilty. You're guilty. And some psychiatrist, some psychologist, some medical doctor or well-meaning buddy will pat you on the back, or let you talk it out, but never does bring you to confession and repentance and cleansing, and does not totally, completely help you. All he does is put a little salve on a cancer that's going to break out again. That guilt must be removed. And there is no possible way that that guilt can be removed until you come face to face with that sin and confess it and turn from it. *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* (Luke 13:3, 5)

How many people today are carrying such a load of guilt, a burden of guilt, because they will not repent?

*Trust me, no tortures which the poets feign*

*Can match that fierce unutterable pain  
He feels, who night and day, devoid of rest,  
Carries his own accuser in his breast.*

—JUVENAL

### C. The Condition of Calvary

But not only should we repent because of the command of Christ, and the call of conscience; but, dear friend, we ought to repent because of the condition of Calvary. Now, what I mean by that is this: to come back to our text in Luke 13, verse 3, Jesus said, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* (Luke 13:3, 5) It makes no difference that Christ died for you on the cross. It makes no difference that the Bible is the Word of God. It makes no difference that the Holy Spirit speaks to you and pleads with you and woos you. If you don’t repent, all of that does you no good. The condition of Calvary is that you must repent. Surely, Christ died for your sin. Surely, your sins are atoned for. Surely, there’s a way made for you into heaven. But that does you no good until you repent, for the condition of Calvary is that you must repent.

You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I’m doing pretty good without repenting.” Remember again that tower hasn’t fallen on you yet. It doesn’t mean that you’re doing good because no calamity has come to you. *Let’s take a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. Take that counterfeit twenty-dollar bill and place it into circulation, and it may do a lot of good. It may go down to the pharmacist and buy some medicine to make a sick child well. The pharmacist may take it and put it in the offering plate at Bellevue Baptist Church, and it may be used for Together We Build. And then it may go from there to buy some groceries for a poor family. And finally it just keeps on going all around, that counterfeit bill, and doing a lot of good until it gets to the bank and in the hands of the teller. And he looks at it and he says, “It’s bogus; it’s counterfeit.” It’s fit for one thing, and that is to be destroyed.*

There are a lot of counterfeit Christians, and they seemingly do some good. They sing in the choir. They take the offering. They may serve as deacons. They may do this, and they may do that; but, dear friend, they’re not going to pass the judgment. *“Except ye repent,”—“except ye repent”—“ye shall all likewise perish.”*

### Conclusion

What is real repentance? It is a conviction of sin. It is a contrition for sin. It is a confession of sin. It is a conversion from sin. It is the same thing as faith in Christ from a negative viewpoint. You turn from idols to serve the living God. You cannot turn to God without turning from sin, and you cannot turn from sin without turning to God. And except ye repent, you’ll all likewise perish.

# The Forgotten Word

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: February 2, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 13:1–5**

*“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

LUKE 13:3

## Outline

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## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find Luke chapter 13—the book of Luke? And in a moment, we are going to begin reading with the first verse. I have already told you that the title of the message tonight is “The Forgotten Word” and that forgotten word that has dropped out of usage in today’s churches is the word *repentance*. No longer is the word repentance used in many pulpits but it has not dropped out of the Word of God. Nine hundred and sixty-nine times we are enjoined in the Bible to repent.

### I. The Mandate for Repentance

Now first of all I want you to think with me tonight about the mandate for repentance. But before we do that let me read this passage of Scripture here. Luke chapter 13 and beginning in verse 1, “There were present at that season some that told him” that is

Jesus “of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Now there were some people who were put to death by Pilot and, there were others who were in a catastrophe when a tower fell on them and they died. And people were talking about it in the market place and in their homes and in the streets. They were saying, I wonder what these people had done that was so terrible, so horrible because they were killed. And Jesus said, do you think that’s why this tragedy happened because they were sinners more than other people? And do you think because no particular tragedy has happened to you that you may not be a sinner because you sailing along high, wide, and handsome? He said no, they didn’t die because they were sinners more than others. And you, because a tower doesn’t fall on you or some calamity does not happen to you, because you are sailing along, does not mean that you do not need to repent. The key is in verse 3 and verse 5. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

What is the mandate for repentance? May I tell you that Jesus here commands it, that Jesus warns that we must repent? The first sermon that Jesus preached, the very first sermon that Jesus preached was repentance. That ought to tell you something. Put in your margin Matthew chapter 4, verse 17, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” From the time Jesus began to preach, the first words out of His mouth are repentance. That ought to tell us something.

Now that was His first message. What was the last message that Jesus gave to the church? Don’t say the Great Commission. That was not the last message Jesus gave to the church. That’s the last message Jesus gave before His ascension. But the last message that Jesus gave to the church is found in the book of the Revelation. Revelation chapter 3, verse 19. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” Now doesn’t that say something? The very first message that Jesus preached repentance. The very last message that Jesus preached is repentance.

Now you may not think that repentance is important but I will tell you what those people in hell think. Those people who are in hell right now, and there are some in hell right now, they think you ought to repent. Luke 16 and verse 30. There was a man in hell who asked Abraham that a messenger might go and give the message and this is what he wanted. “And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” Do you know what the people in hell think the people in this

auditorium ought to do? They think they ought to repent. The mandate for repentance is this, that Jesus Christ began His ministry concluded His ministry. Those in hell believe that we ought to repent.

## **II. The Meaning of Repentance**

Now secondly, I want you to notice the meaning of repentance. Many of us don't know what repentance means. Luke 13: 3, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Now we need to understand, first of all, what repentance is not so we can understand what it is.

### **A. Repentance Is More Than Conviction of Sin**

Repentance is more than conviction of sin. You can be convicted of sin and still not repent. There was a man named Paul. Paul preached to a ruler of his day. The ruler's name was Felix. And Paul opened the Bible and Paul preached with the anointing of the Holy Ghost so much that this man literally trembled. Acts 24, verse 25. Now, Paul, you can tell what Paul was preaching, "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Paul preached with such anointing, such power, such a convicting spirit that this man literally trembled but he didn't get saved. There is no record in the Bible that he ever got saved. I sincerely believe that Felix is in hell. He trembled under the preaching of the Word of God. He was convicted but he did not repent. Repentance is more than conviction of sin.

### **B. Repentance Is More Than Confession of Sin**

Secondly, repentance is more than confession of sin. You can confess your sin and still not repent. I am going to give you a number of episodes where men literally used these words "I have sinned." They said with their mouths, "I have sinned." They confessed their sin but none of them repented.

#### **1. The Horrified Confession of Pharaoh**

For example, there is the horrified confession of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt. Moses went to him and said, "Pharaoh, God's going to judge you if you don't turn from your sin. God is going to judge you if you don't begin to treat the people of God as you ought." Now let me read the Scripture to you, Exodus 9, verses 22 to 27. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and there was fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And

the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail. And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them”—now listen to this—“I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.”

Now do you think he repented? He said, “I have sinned.” When did he say this? When the thunder was rolling and the hail was falling and the fire was flashing through the land. When God took away the thunder and the lightening and the hail, notice what happened. In Exodus chapter 9, verse 34, “And Pharaoh, when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.” He said, “I have sinned.” And God took away the thing that was plaguing him and he sinned all the more. He confessed his sin but he did not repent.

I want, I have seen that happen so many times, people who get in a bind. Perhaps a wife will leave home, perhaps a child will be hit by an automobile, perhaps some tragedy will come and they say, “Pastor, pray for me. Oh, I need to do something about my sin.” And as soon as the problem is past they go back into deeper sin. And I am telling you there are few things that will harden your heart like that, to confess your sin and never really repent with promises unkept. Now there was the horrified confession of Pharaoh.

## **2. The Hypocritical Confession of Balaam**

And there was the hypocritical confession of Balaam. Who was Balaam? Balaam was one of the strangest men in the Old Testament. He was a prophet of sorts. He knew God. He knew truth. But there was another man called Balak, who was a king of Moab. The king of Moab wanted to defeat the Israelites but he knew that God was for them. He knew that Balaam was a prophet. So he came to Balaam and said, “Balaam, would you curse God’s people for me?” Balaam knew the Bible. He knew that God said, “Those that curse Israel, I will curse.” He said, “No, I can’t curse them.” But he said, “I’ll tell you what to do. If you can get them to sin, God will curse them. They will curse themselves.” Now, what the king of Moab tried to do was to hire this prophet to make a hireling out of him. Now Balaam was a strange man. He wanted to serve God but he wanted to rake off some profits on the side. He kind of wanted to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds at the same time. He was a strange man. And he is on his way in his task and God is allowing him to go only so far. And there happens to be an angel of the Lord with a drawn sword and he is standing in front of Balaam. Balaam is riding upon a donkey. And he is going this way. The donkey sees the angel with the drawn sword. The donkey turns out into the field. Balaam begins to whip the donkey. The donkey comes back, starts again. And they are going through a narrow place and, the donkey sees the angel

of the Lord with a drawn sword. The donkey moves up against the wall and crushes Balaam's leg and foot. Balaam beats him again. They start again, this time a narrow place. There's, you can't go this way or that way. The donkey just collapses. And Balaam beats him. God performs a miracle and the donkey spoke. I know the language he used, Hebrayic. He spoke. And he said, "Why are you beating me? What have I done?" And God opened the eyes of this prophet and he saw the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword. Now that's the background and notice what happened here in Numbers chapter 22, verse 34. "And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." But he never changed. He never changed. It was a hypocritical confession. He never really meant it. They are praising God on Sunday but they will be all right on Monday. It is just a little habit they have formed. Have you said, "Oh yes, I am a sinner" but a halfhearted confession like ole Balaam?

### **3. The Halfhearted Confession of Saul**

Now there is not only the hypocritical and horrified confession, but there is the halfhearted confession of Saul. Saul was king over Israel. There was a prophet that told Saul, "Saul when you go to battle against the Amalekites, I want you to utterly destroy them, man and beast, utterly destroy them." Samuel comes back and says to Saul, "Saul, did you do what the Lord told you to do?" He said, "Oh yes I did." Well Samuel said, "I hear these sheep bleating over here. I hear these cattle lowing over here. What does all of that mean?" "Oh," he say, said, "Well, I feared the voice of the people. The people didn't want me to do this. You can find this in 1 Samuel chapter 15, verse 24, "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." And Samuel said to Saul, "Saul, it is like you are practicing witchcraft. To obey is better than to sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." But the point is that here ole Saul says, "I have sinned." "I have sinned" but it was a halfhearted confession. He had an excuse. He had an alibi. He had a reason. You ask a man why he drinks. He says, "My wife nags all the time." You ask her why she nags, "because he drinks so much." Everybody has a reason, an alibi, an excuse. And when Saul saved these animals and spared king Agag, it sounded reasonable, it sounded sensible, it sounded logical. Besides that, he had taken a poll and that is what the people wanted done. He said, he used these words, "I have sinned." But he never repented.

### **4. The Hemmed-Up Confession of Achan**

There was a man named Achan. There was a great battle, the battle of Jericho. The people of God marched around the walls of this ancient city, great in enormity, great in iniquity, great in antiquity. They marched around the walls. They gave a shout the walls

fell down. God gave Jericho, that first city after they passed over Jordan; God gave Jericho to the children of Israel. But God put up a prohibition. God said all of the brass, all of the silver, all of the gold shall be given to the treasury of the Lord. Don't take any of it. Why? The battle was the Lord's. Then the spoil of the battle belongs to God.

There was a man named Achan who sneaked in to the city, went over the rubble, found a Babylonian garment, found a wedge of gold, found two hundred shekels of silver, brought them home, put them in his tent, buried them in his tent, rolled his sleeping mat over that. And then there was another little city that they needed to come against. A city named Ai—two letters—small name, small city. They said, "Shall we send an army up?" They said, "No, you don't have to send many people. That is just a little insignificant city. Look how strong we are. We took Jericho, don't worry about Ai."

By the way, this story bothers me very much when I think of Iraq. "We have done it before; we can do it again." No, we don't need to cry out to God for mercy. No, no, we've done it before.

You see, but what happened was this: that Achan took the spoils of the battle. And the Bible called that the accursed thing. Why is that? When God gives a victory, we need to give God the glory. Now friend, God has blessed this, Bellevue Baptist Church. The minute we begin to strut and say, "Look what we have done." The minute we begin to take the glory to ourselves, that's when we no longer have the blessing. That's when we receive the curse. That's when our blessings turn to cursings. That's what happened, to Israel so long ago. They failed to give God the glory and they were ignominiously defeated. They went before the people of Ai like whipped puppies.

Now finally, Achan is taken. There are lots casts. One by one, the tribes are separated out. One by one, the families. One by one, until the onus is on him. He is the one who is guilty and he stands out before the Lord. And Joshua says to him, in Joshua chapter 7 and verse 20, actually Achan is speaking this time. "And Achan answered Joshua, and said,"—now, watch this—"indeed I have sinned." The same word. All of these men have said this same thing. "I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel and thus and thus have I done." But notice that is chapter 7 verse 20. Joshua 7, verse 25, "and Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire," that is his family "after they had stoned them with stones." He could not cover the grave of his sin. The Bible says, "He that confesseth his sin shall have mercy." But, whatever we cover God uncovers.

Now what is the point of all of this? This confession was not a horrified confession. This confession was not a hypocritical confession. This confession was not a halfhearted confession. What this confession was a hemmed-up confession. He waited until he was caught and then he confessed his sin. But it was too late.

I had done something as a little boy before I had ever even started school. My older

brother, Arden, told on me. I heard my dad come in the house and say, “Adrian, come here.” I ran upstairs. He said, “Anybody seen Adrian?” My brother said, “He was here just a little while ago.” My dad said, “Well, I will find him.” I heard my dad go from room to room around that house. I was upstairs hiding. I heard my dad come up the stairs. I went in the bedroom. I heard my dad put his hand on the bedroom door. I went under the bed. My dad went in the bedroom and said, “I believe he is in here.” The noose was getting tighter and tighter. I came out from under the bed and I said, “Dad, do you remember when you said if we ever do anything wrong if we will come and confess it now that we can have mercy.” You know it didn’t work at all. What happened is this. I was not sorry for what I had done. I was sorry that I got caught. I was hemmed up. That is not a repenting spirit.

### **5. The Hopeless Confession of Judas**

There is another man who said I have sinned. His name was Judas. Listen to it—Matthew 27 verse 4. Judas cast that, those pieces of silver there and said, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they” the Pharisees “said, What is that to us? See thou to it.” You take care of that. What, now, what kind of a confession was this. This was the hopeless confession. It was a confession of remorse. Judas had committed the unpardonable sin. Judas had crossed the deadline. Judas filled a suicide’s grave. And he said, “I have sinned.” But he never repented.

I have said all of this to say; listen repentance is more than confession of sin. Every one of these men that I have mentioned used those words “I have sinned” and not a one of them repented.

### **C. Repentance Is a Heart Change**

I will tell you what else repentance is now. What is repentance? Repentance is a heart change. The word *repent*—*metanoia*—is a combination of two words, which means a change of mind or a change of heart. It is a turning from sin to Jesus. There is a negative and there is a positive. Acts chapter 20 and verse 21. Paul said we are to be “testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Repentance and faith are heads and tails of the same coin. You cannot repent toward God unless you turn to Jesus Christ. You tell God that you are sorry for your sin and turn to Jesus Christ for forgiveness.

Again, let me give you another scripture that shows you the heads and tails. I Thessalonians 1:9, “For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had among you, how you turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God, the living and true God.” Repentance and faith are heads and tails of the same, act.

One time one of these seminary students at Mid-America Seminary came to me and challenged me. And he said, “Pastor, you preached a sermon, told people how to be

saved but you didn't say repent. So you left something out." I said, "Did I tell them to trust Jesus?" He said, "Yes, but you didn't tell them to repent." I said, "Let me ask you a question. Do you believe the Gospel of John tells people how to be saved?" Well he had to yes, of course, because the Gospel of John was written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and believing you might, have life through His name. I said, "Tell me, can you find the word repentance in the Gospel of John?" He didn't know, but you can't. Repentance is not in there. In the entire Gospel of John the word *repentance* is not in there. But repentance is taught in the Gospel of John. You see, faith and repentance are the heads and tails of the same coin. You cannot have one without the other. You cannot turn to God without turning from sin. And you cannot turn from sin without turning to God. Of course I believe in repentance. And genuine faith, whether or not you use the word, must be a change. It is a heart change. And it is whole-hearted change. Now this is very important.

Ezekiel 14, verse 6, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." Repent. Turn from your idols and all of your abominations. You cannot repent segment, in segments. God will not accept partial repentance. How many of you ladies have a husband? Let me see your hand. All right. Now suppose your husband said to you, "Sweetheart, I have been running around on you but I am not going to do that anymore much." "I am going to be ninety-five per cent faithful to you darling." How many of you would accept that? Repentance is a change of heart. Repentance is a whole-hearted change of heart.

#### **D. Repentance Is a Continuing Change of Heart**

And I will tell you something else. Repentance is a continuing change of heart. It is not something that you do once. It is not something that you do in order to get saved and then forget it. Jesus was speaking to the church in that last command when He said, "Repent" that I told you about. Repentance is a crisis followed by a process. We live repenting day-by-day-by-day. I have done far more repenting after I have gotten saved than I did when I got saved because I know more about me and I know more about God.

### **III. The Motive for Repentance**

Now here is the third and final thing before we take the Lord's Supper. I want you to notice not only the mandate and the meaning of repentance. But I want you to see the motive for repentance. Now Jesus said in Luke 13: 3, "except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." May I give you three motives for repentance?

#### **A. The Command of God**

Number one, the command of God, the command of God. In Acts chapter 17, verse 30,

the Bible says, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now” listen “now commandeth all men every where to repent.” That’s the Word of God. God commands it since all are sinners. None are excluded. The rich man is poor, the moral man is sinful, the educated man is a fool, if he tries to go against the command of Christ. What is the motive for repentance? Number one, the command of God.

### **B. The Curse of Guilt**

Number two, the curse of guilt, the curse of guilt. Your par, your poor heart will never, no ever, no never ever find rest apart from repentance. Isaiah chapter 57 and verse 20, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” Like the heaving bosom of the ocean in a storm is your troubled heart. You wonder why you can’t sleep. You wonder why you are irritable. You wonder why you have no joy. You wonder where there is no, why there is no song. You wonder why there is no faith like we have preached about this morning. Try repentance. Friend, there are certain things that God puts in order in the Bible.

For example, the Bible says believe and be baptized. It never says be baptized and believe. If you are baptized before you believe, it is like having your funeral before you die. You believe and then you get baptized. Some of you got immersed and then you truly got saved. You need to come down this aisle tonight and say, “I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I want believer’s baptism.” The order is, believe and be baptized. Another order. “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.” It never says peace and grace. It is always grace and peace. Why? Because you will never know peace until you experience grace.

Now let me give you the order that I am working up to. It is repentance and faith, never faith and repentance, repentance and faith. If you are having difficulty with faith, try repentance. When you get your heart clean, I mean clean, when you repent, when you are walking before the Lord, as I said this morning, when your heart is clean, your motive is clear, you are filled with the Spirit, abiding in Christ. You are going to find faith in your heart. The Bible says, “Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” The curse of guilt is another reason that we need to repent. What a curse it is. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. The poet said, “Trust me. No torture the poets name can match that fierce unutterable pain, he feels who night and day devoid of rest, carries his own accuser within his breast.” The wicked are like the troubled sea.

### **C. The Condition of Grace**

Here is the third reason. Not only the command of God, not only the curse of guilt, but friend the condition of grace. Now thank God for the grace of God. You are not saved by works at all, but if you don’t repent, grace cannot work in your heart. Luke 13:3, Jesus

said it. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." I am telling you Christ died in vain for you if you will not repent. If you do not repent, you will perish. You say, "But Pastor Rogers, I do good things." Well so can a counterfeit ten-dollar bill. A counterfeit ten-dollar bill can help pay the rent. A counterfeit can buy groceries. A counterfeit ten-dollar bill can be put in the offering plate. Now don't you do that. But it can be put in the offering plate and help missionary work. But when it falls into the hands of the teller and he recognizes that bill as a counterfeit then the federal agents are called in and that bill is destroyed. You may do many good things but there is coming a final judgment. And that final judgment is going to say you are a fake. You are a fraud. You are a counterfeit. You never repented. You are not saved. You will perish. You will perish. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

What does repentance bring? It brings a new heart. It brings a new hope. It brings a new home. Why repent? The command of God. The curse of guilt. The condition of grace.

## **Conclusion**

Now I am finished. But may I say this is the hour for repentance? Don't you take this message tonight and say I will think about it. Tomorrow perhaps I will repent. That is what Felix did. Felix said, "Paul go your way, when I have a more convenient time I will call upon you." Listen to me. Look at this pastor. Don't even gather your books right now, just because I closed mine. You just look at me. Tomorrow you will only have more sin to repent of and less time to repent in. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot behave your way to heaven. I am not trying to tell you if you can be good enough God will save you but I am telling you that you cannot cling to your sin and cling to Jesus at the same time. You have to say, "I am tired of it. I am sick of it." There is a heart change. There is whole-hearted change. And it will be a continuing change. I repent because I don't want to perish. And those of us who have stepped into the kingdom and are saved, when we come to the Lord's table, we need to search our hearts and see if there is something that has crept back into our lives that we need to repent of.

So would you bow your heads in prayer? Spend a little time with the Lord right now. And if God lays some sin upon your heart, you as a child of God, perhaps it's a bad attitude, perhaps it's an unclean habit, perhaps it's a dishonest practice, perhaps it's a belligerent spirit. Name it. Repent of it. "If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Father, help us now as we prepare our hearts for Your table and to fellowship with You Lord, truly in repentance and faith. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

# True Confessions and Counterfeit Confessions

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 16, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 13:1–5**

*“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

LUKE 13:3

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## Introduction

Would you find God’s Word and open God’s Word to Luke chapter 13—the Gospel of Luke chapter 13. In a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse one.

If the news reports are correct, after the President of the United States goes before the Grand Jury to testify, or before he testifies, he may make some admission to the people of the United States concerning malfeasance, indiscretion, sin, or whatever on his part. Now, we’ll wait for that, and we don’t know what he will say, if, indeed, he will say anything, but we do know that we have a nation in crisis. But the question comes as to what kind of a statement, if he makes it, should it be? And I listen to the pundits, I listen to the commentators, I listen too much. Back and forth—back and forth. And there’re those who speak of the matter from a legal viewpoint. What is legal? There’re others who speak of it from a political viewpoint. What would be best politically? Very frankly, I am not a lawyer, I’m not a politician, so I want to speak about it from a theological viewpoint. I want to look at it from what God may say about his confession,

your confession, my confession, any kind of a confession or statement, when wrongdoing may have occurred. Now, I'm not here to adjudicate him innocent or guilty, someone else will do that. I'm here to pray. But I am here to give us a point of reference from the Word of God. And when I do that, I'm also cognizant of the fact that many don't care about that, so I'm not talking to everybody, I'm talking to us. We're not trying to say that everybody in America will agree with the Book. But I think we, as God's people, want to know what the Book says. We want to know what, from God's holy perspective, would be right.

Now, beginning in Luke chapter 13, verse 1, "There were present at that season some who told him..." that is, who told Jesus, "...of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." Some people were up there in Galilee serving, sacrificing to God, and Pilate came up there and, in some, in some way decimated them and, obviously killed them, and so, there are human blood and the blood of their sacrifice was mingled together. Verse 2, "And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them..." Evidently, there was a tower, in Siloam, that collapsed. Whether it was wind, tornado, whether it was just a crumbling tower, we don't know, but eighteen people died in a calamity. And Jesus said, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Now, what Jesus is saying there is that, if nothing calamitous has happened to you, that doesn't mean you're right with God. If you've not had some calamity, if you're living high, wide, and handsome, that's not necessarily a sign that God's favor is upon you. As a matter of fact, we know that all people, as we're going to see, are commanded to repent. Luke 13:3, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." We're not talking merely about the president. We're not merely talking about people who have calamity happen to them, we're talking about the human race. Now the word "repentance" today has dropped from popular usage. It has not been dropped from the Bible. Nine hundred and sixty-nine times the Bible enjoins us to repent. The very first sermon that Jesus preached was repentance. Matthew 4, verse 17, "Jesus came preaching repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The very last message gave was not the Great Commission, it came after the Great Commission through the Apostle John and it was to the church, and it's found in Revelation chapter 3, verse 19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent." The first, the last message of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is repentance. Now, you may not be interested in repentance, but I can tell you those in hell are very much interested in repentance.

In the sixteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus told of a rich man who died and in hell he lift

up his eyes, being in torment, and prayed that somebody would go to his brothers, who were still here on this earth, and plead with them to repent. People in hell are far more interested in the subject of repentance than some may be here tonight.

Now, what do we mean by “repentance”? What is repentance? Well, the word *repentance*, *metanoia*, means a change of mind. It’s putting together two words, change and mind, and that’s what repentance means. But it is more than an intellectual change of mind; it is a change of mind that leads to a change of heart. Now, much that seems like repentance is not repentance. And let’s don’t think merely about, what’s happening in Washington, let’s think about what’s happening in Memphis, and think not only about what is happening in Memphis, but what is happening in Bellevue. And think, not only about what is happening in Bellevue, but what is happening in your family. And think not only about what is happening in your family, but in you personally. You know we, so many times, we hope that they hear the message, right?

Now, what is repentance? It is more than conviction of sin. You can be mightily convicted of sin and not repent. As a matter of fact, turn to, and we’re going to look at some Scriptures tonight, so just turn, first of all, to Acts chapter 24, if you will, and I want you to see what happened to a man named Felix. Felix had the Gospel preached to him and he got mightily under conviction—so much under conviction that he trembled. And, as a preacher, I’ve seen this happen. Notice in Acts 24, verse 25, Paul is preaching to Felix, who was a politician, and a governmental leader, “And as he...” that is, Paul, “...reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled...” And, I like to see that. I believe if we knew how sinful we are and how holy God is and the kind of a judgment that waits us without salvation, we would tremble too. He trembled and answered to Paul, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. So far as we know, history does not report that he ever found that convenient season—that he ever got saved, though he was convicted of sin.

You may sit in a service like this, tremble like a leaf in a storm, perspiration may appear on your brow, your hands may tremble, but then, you turn your back on the message, harden your heart against God, and go into hell. Repentance is more than conviction of sin. Repentance is conviction of sin, but more than that. It is more than confession of sin. You may confess your sin but not repent. And that brings us, particularly, to what we’re talking about tonight.

## **I. False Repentance**

I want to lead you in a study of the Bible tonight, and we’re going to go through the Bible and we’re going to find something amazing as we study. We’re going to find a list of individuals who have used these words: “I have sinned.” I have sinned. But they did not repent. They were convicted of sin, and they confessed their sin, but it was not

repentance.

#### A. **Pharaoh: The Horrified Confession**

For example, turn to Exodus chapter 9, and it will do you good just to turn to these Scriptures tonight, so turn to them with me. Exodus chapter 9, and this is the story of Pharaoh. And this is what I want to call the horrified confession, the horrified confession of, of Pharaoh. Pharaoh, now, is horrified; he's terrified because of the things that are about to Pharaoh. Begin now in Exodus nine and I begin to read verses 22 and following, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail." Now watch verse 27, "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, I and my people are wicked." That's a good confession. Pharaoh says, "I have sinned!" When the thunder was rolling, when the hail was falling, when the lightening was flashing, Pharaoh now horrified, terrified says, "I have sinned." But I want you to look now in verse 34, "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants." The so-called repentance that was born in the storm, died in the calm. As soon as the emergency seemed to be over, that no, that's how long it lasted. There're many who are listening to me, perhaps through radio, perhaps some here, other's who will listen later by tape, may be in a time of trouble, you made holy vows to God, you made promises to God, maybe on the battlefield, maybe when you're marriage was breaking up, maybe when you were in a court of law, and you said, "O God, have mercy upon me, I've sinned." And then things smooth out and you go back to the old way. Repentance is more than confession of sin, there was the horrified confession of Pharaoh. You know, there are some people who like to confess when trouble is around.

#### B. **Balaam: The Hypocritical Confession**

Now, next, turn to Numbers chapter 22 with me, just keep on going to the right in the Bible, and turn to Numbers chapter 22, you're going to find another man who's name was Balaam. He made the same kind of a confession; at least he uses these same words. Look in Numbers 22 and verse 34, "And Balaam said unto the angel of the

LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.”

Now who was Balaam? Balaam, the prophet Balaam, was one of the strangest men in all of the Bible. He knew how to do what was right for him for political gain, and he also knew how to talk very religious. He ran with the hare, he hunted with the hound. He could play it either way. When he spoke on spiritual matters, he had the voice of an angel. But when he was dealing under the table, he had the heart of a devil. But he comes to a place where he says, “I have sinned.” But he was a hypocrite. He was the kind of man if he were in trouble would go to church on television and walk out with a big black Bible in his hand. They’re praising God on Sunday, but they’ll be all right on Monday—it’s just a little habit they have acquired. Balaam was a hypocrite. He said, “I have sinned.” But he went right on his way till one day he’s going along, riding on his donkey, and the donkey collapses underneath him. The donkey crushes Balaam’s foot against a wall. For the dumb donkey had more insight than this hypocritical prophet. And, finally, the Lord spoke to Balaam, and He could see what the donkey had already seen, was an angel of God standing there with a drawn sword. And said, “Had you come any further, I would have killed you. I would have slain you.” Here was a man saying, “Yes, I have sinned.” But so far as we can tell, never ever really, truly repented.

You have to pity people like this, because they’re too weak to serve God and they’re too much of a coward to openly serve the devil. Now, so, you see what I call the horrified confession, that’s Pharaoh. You see the hypocritical confession, that’s Balaam. Both of these are confessions in time of trouble.

### **C. Saul: The Halfhearted Confession**

Then you see a halfhearted confession, that’s Saul. Turn, if you will, to 1 Samuel chapter 15—just keep turning to the right in your Bible, and come to 1 Samuel chapter 15, and Saul was the king. He was the counterpart of the president; he was the leader of the nation. And God had commanded him through the prophet Samuel to do thus and such a thing, and he disobeyed openly, willingly, willfully, but now notice in chapter 15, and I want to read in verse 24, “And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned...” That’s interesting, isn’t it? That Pharaoh said, “I have sinned.” Balaam said, “I have sinned.” Saul says, “I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because...” now listen to this, “I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.” That is, “I was doing what was politically correct.” “Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return unto thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, [and] he laid hold upon the skirt [and] of his mantle, and it rent.” Now, what is happening here? You have you have Saul, who is saying that he has sinned, but he has never

really repented. Go down to verse 35, and notice what it says, “And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that he’d [ever] made Saul king over Israel.” Now, here’s Saul, but his confession of sin is more of an alibi, more of an excuse, than a confession. He never ever really felt guilty.

Saul was an extraordinary man; he was a consummate politician. He was head and shoulders above other men. But when Samuel said to Saul, “Saul, why did you not obey the Word of the Lord? I told you that you were to take all of the property the Amalekites, their sheep, their oxen and slay them, and Agag, was to be slain.” And Saul said, “Well now, let me tell you why I didn’t do that.” And he thought he could talk his way out. He said, “I didn’t want to kill all of these sheep and all of these oxen. I saved them. I saved them to sacrifice to the Lord.” Now, what you have here is a confession with an alibi, a confession with an excuse, a confession with a rationale. Come up close, I want to tell you something: God longs to forgive sin. But there’s one thing that the blood of God does not cleanse and that is an alibi. There’s one thing that the blood of God, Jesus, does not cleanse, and that is an excuse. Now Saul was good. What Saul said sounded reasonable, it sounded sensible. It sounded logical. It sounded economical, but it just simply did not work. And so many of us want to have some sort of an alibi, some sort of a reason, some sort of an excuse. Adam, in the Garden of Eden, blamed Eve, “The woman thou gavest me.” Eve blamed the serpent; the serpent didn’t have a leg to stand on. They’re just blaming, pushing the blame. And, today, we have a generation today that will not accept culpability for sin. We have a society that says the problem is either heredity, glands, environment, the wrong crowd. How many people have I talked with that have the same kind of an excuse, a halfhearted confession? “Do you drink?” “Yes, I drink.” “Well, why do you drink?” “I have to drink to live with that woman. She nags all the time.” “Do you nag all the time?” “Well who wouldn’t nag? Have you seen the way he drinks?” And so it is. Everybody has an alibi; everybody has an excuse.

You know, I get weary of people constantly talking with lawyers as to how they’re going to answer questions. You know what our Lord said? And I know the world doesn’t agree with this. The world says, “You don’t have to be under oath,” I mean, the Bible says, “You don’t have to be under oath to tell the truth.” Jesus said, “You don’t have to swear. Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.” You don’t have to figure out a way to tell the truth. If you tell the truth, it’s over once. If you tell a lie, you have to keep on lying thousands of times. Let your yea be yea. Let your nay be nay. Say yes or no.

One man was in a courtroom and the judge said, “Do you have a lawyer?” He said, “I don’t need a lawyer.” He said, “You don’t need a lawyer? Why?” He said, “I plan to tell the truth.”

The truth. There was the horrified confession of Pharaoh, “I have sinned.” There was

the hypocritical confession of Balaam, “I have sinned.” There was the halfhearted confession of Saul, the King: “I have sinned.”

#### **D. Achan: The Hemmed-Up Confession**

Turn now to Joshua, just go backward a little bit, Joshua chapter 7, and look with me, in verse 20. This is a story of a man named Achan, in Joshua chapter 7 and verse 20, “And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed, I have sinned...” There is our word again. “...Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.” And, then, go down to verse 25, “And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us?” Now, here was a man whose sin got the whole nation in trouble. Here was a man who, might have said, “What I do is my own private business.” But he brought the whole nation down through his sin, “And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, [and] after they had stoned them with stones.”

Now, who was Achan? Well, after the Battle of Jericho, God had given victory to Jericho; God said that the booty of the battle, the spoils of the battle, is to be given to the treasury of the Lord. All the gold, all the silver, all the iron, all the brass was to be brought into the treasury of the Lord. But there was a man named Achan who went in after the battle was over, after the walls of Jericho had come down, and Achan took a wedge of gold, he took several sheckles of silver, he took a Babylonian garment and he brought it back and buried it his tent, tried to cover the matter, buried it under his sleeping mat, perhaps, in his tent. Now, friend, I want to tell you something about God, the Bible says, “He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but who so confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” What you cover, God uncovers. What you uncover, God covers. Now, Achan had the idea that he could cover his sin. And he took these things from the treasury of the Lord. He buried them in the midst of his tent. Finally, finally, ha, about to go a direction I better not go. Finally got hemmed up. Finally, there was no way that he could squirm. Finally the honest was on him. He, finally, the lot was taken and he had tried every defense, every strategy to try to hide it and finally it narrowed and narrowed and narrowed and narrowed until finally he was hemmed up. There was nowhere he could go. Says, “Hey, I want to tell you something. I’ve sinned.” He’s hemmed up. A hemmed-up, hemmed-in, hedged-in confession. It’s not the confession of repentance. It was the confession of necessity. He had nothing else to do; there was nothing else he could do but confess.

When I was a little boy living in West Palm Beach, Florida, I can remember it. I was not yet going to school, just knee-high to a grasshopper. We lived on Florida Avenue, and one thing that we were told: you do not play in the street. That’s good advice, cars coming down Florida Avenue in West Palm Beach, Florida. Don’t play in the street. Upon a time, my brother saw me just had my feet in the street, sitting on a curb. He

went and told Mama, “Adrian is in the street.” I heard him tell my mother. She didn’t know, but I heard him. And I heard my mother tell my father, “Adrian has been in the street.” I heard my father call me. I ran up stairs, and, I waited. My father said, “Adrian. Adrian. Adrian.” No answer. I heard footfalls coming up the step, so I went into the bedroom and shut the door. I heard my daddy go into one bedroom, another bedroom and the bathroom, “Adrian. Adrian.” Then I heard his hand upon the doorknob of that bedroom, I went under the bed. My dad came into that room and he said, “Adrian. Adrian.” And somebody said, “Perhaps he’s under the bed.” At that time I came out from under the bed. And I said, “Dad, I want to tell you something.” “Do you remember, Dad, when you said...” This happened, all right, “Remember, Dad, when you said if I ever disobey you, if I’ll just come to you and confess and get...” Hey, folks, I’m here to tell you, it did not work. I mean my daddy applied the board of education to the seat of knowledge.

This is the way Achan was. I mean, there was nothing else he could do. I mean, the noose had tightened upon him and he is hemmed up. And he says, “I have sinned.” That’s not repentance, friend.

#### **E. Judas: The Hopeless Confession**

And then, turn in the New Testament, if you will, to Matthew chapter 27, and look, if you will, in verse 4. This is the confession of a man named Judas who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. Beginning in verse 3, “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned...” when he saw that Jesus, that is, “...was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.” Now, that doesn’t mean he had repentance toward God, he just said, “Look what I’ve done.” He repented himself. And now, notice now in verse 4 saying, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.” In other words, “That makes no difference to us.”

Now, if there is what we call a horrified confession, and that is Pharaoh, if there’s what we call a hypocritical confession, and that is Balaam, if there is what we call a halfhearted confession, and that is Saul, if there is what we call a hemmed-in confession, and that is Achan, this confession was a hopeless confession. I mean, it is the confession of absolute remorse. Judas goes out from this place to hang himself. He had so played with the game of sin, and so wounded his conscious that he crossed God’s deadline. And there are those who, because of the repercussions of sin, are so filled with remorse that they fill a suicide’s grave, and yet they’ve not repented. It’s not true repentance. Judas, the Bible teaches, died and went to hell.

## **II. True Repentance**

So, what is repentance? Repentance is more than contrition for sin, or conviction of sin,

because Felix was convicted but he didn't repent. Repentance is more than the confession of sin. These men confessed but they did not repent. Well, you say, "Yes, they needed a broken heart, contrition." But I want to say that repentance is more than conviction, confession, and contrition. You can weep and still not have repented. Did you know that, tears often accompany repentance? But often I have seen tears and yet there was no true repentance. Put this verse down, 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 10, the Bible says, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of..." that is, you don't have to repent for getting saved, once you get saved you don't want to change your name of that, "...but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Judas had the sorrow of the world.

So, what is repentance? It is not mere conviction, not mere confession, not mere contrition. The word *repentance* is *metanoia*; it is a change of mind, a change of heart that leads to a change of action. Now, if it doesn't lead to a change of action, it is not true repentance. And repentance, true repentance has a heads and a tails to it. A key verse here is Acts chapter 20 and verse 21. The Bible speaks of "...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"—"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Now that tells me that repentance and faith are heads and tails of the same coin. That is, you cannot turn to God unless you turn from sin. And you cannot turn from sin unless you turn to God. Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul talked about those in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 9, "...who turned from idols to serve the living God."

This is Founders Days at Mid-America Seminary, and I love the seminary boys, I love preacher boys, but I had one of them to challenge me one time when we were in the old church. He came up and he said, "Pastor, you didn't give the invitation right today." I said, "Well, tell me about it." He said, "Well, you were telling people how to be saved and you didn't mention repentance, and so, you didn't tell the whole story. You just told people to trust Christ, to turn to God, believe on Jesus, and they will be saved." I said, "Oh?" I said, that, "You can't tell people how to be saved without using the word repentance. Is that what you're saying?" He said, "That's what I'm saying." I said, "What book in the Bible was written, particularly, to tell people how to be saved. Do you know?" Well, he wasn't sure, so I told him. It's the Gospel of John. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that you have eternal life." Or these things, "All of these signs were done...", rather, "...that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and believing you might have life through His name." That's, that's the reason the Gospel of John was written that people might believe and be saved. And, I said, "Young man, I want you to tell me where the word repentance is found in the Gospel of John." Did you know it is not in the Gospel of John at all? Not one time can you find the word repentance in the Gospel of John. Does that

mean, therefore, that John was opposed to repentance? Not at all—not at all. I’m trying to tell you that repentance and faith are heads and tails of the same coin. You cannot turn to God without turning from sin, and you cannot turn from sin without turning to God. And whether the exact word is used is not the point. I’m telling you that repentance must be in the heart, the mind, it is change of mind towards sin, towards self, toward God, toward salvation, where you come, and with all of your heart, as much as in you is, yield yourself to Almighty God. That’s repentance. Repentance. It is a change. And, friend, repentance is a whole-hearted change. Put this verse down, Ezekiel 14 and verse 6, “Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.” Not some of them. You can’t repent with your fingers crossed behind your back. What wife wants a husband who says, “I’ll be 95% faithful.” No, you, you’ve got to come clean with God. And, not see, and repentance, you’re not only broken over your sin, you’re broken from your sin. It is a change, it is a whole-hearted change, it is a continuing change. Repentance is not something you once did; it is something you continue to do. I told you a few more, a few Sundays back, I’ve done a lot more repenting after I got saved than I ever did when I got saved. We continue to repent. Salvation is a crisis; it is followed by a process; we live lives of continual repentance, trusting the Lord moment by moment. Broken not only over our sins, but broken from them.

Now, I’m almost finished, and I doubt very seriously that Washington will be listening to this message; I’m talking to the children of God. I’m talking to you so you can teach your children some things. I’m talking to you about what God’s Word says. We’re not talking politically. We’re not talking legally. We’re talking theologically, what the Bible says about repentance. Why repent? Why did Jesus say, in the Scripture that we began with, in Luke chapter 13, verse 3, “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” Well, I want to give you several reasons, and then I’ll be finished.

#### **A. The Command of God**

Number one, the command of God. Acts chapter 17, verse 30, “God commandeth all men, everywhere to repent.” Since all men are sinners, none is excluded. The rich man must repent. The poor man must repent. The moral man is wicked. The educated man is a fool until he comes to Christ in repentance. God has commanded that all men everywhere repent. And God sent me here to tell you that if you’ve not repented and don’t repent you’re going to die and go to hell. Those are the words of Jesus, “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” You say, “But Pastor, we live in a fine home. I’m healthy. I’ve got fine children. I’m doing well.” Jesus said, “You think those men who died from Pilate’s were sinners above all others? Do you think just those upon whom the tower fell, do you think they were the only one’s that should have repented and didn’t? Nay, I tell you, except ye all likewise, except ye repent ye shall all likewise

perish.” Reason number one, the command of God, God commands it.

### **B. The Curse of Guilt**

Number two, the curse of guilt—the curse of guilt. Your heart will never ever have true rest until you repent. If the President has done wrong and he squeaks by, that would be the worst thing that could ever happen to him, if he does this without true repentance. Isaiah 57, verse 20, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” There’s only one thing that takes away the curse of guilt and that is repentance. You ask people, “What is guilt? What is guilt?” “Oh,” they say, “Guilt is the feeling you have when you’ve done wrong.” No! That’s not guilt. That’s the guilt feeling. You put your hand on a hot stove and your hand cooks and blisters come up and it’s red and raw, what is, what is the burn? Is it the pain you feel? No, that’s the burn feeling; the burn is your hand. The guilt has to be done. You see, what, what we have today is a society that is moving heaven and earth to deal with the guilt feeling. And it may be a sedative, it may be a psychologist, it may be some seminar to how to help you to accept your self and forgive yourself and be affirmed and all that tripe. Until you repent you will never know the peace of God because the Bible says, “There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.” The poet said it well, “Trust me. No torture the poet’s name can match, that fierce unutterable pain he feels, who day and night devoid of rest, carries his own accuser within his breast.”

### **C. The Condition of Grace**

Now, here’s a third reason that men need to repent; not only the command of God and the curse of guilt, but the condition of grace—the condition of grace. Friend, I’m going to tell you something, Jesus died in vain for you if you refuse to repent—in vain. There’s no way that you can be saved, for Jesus said, “Except you repent, you will perish.”

You know what people are saying? “Well, thus and such a person may have done bad, but they’ve also done a lot of good—a lot of good for a lot of people. You know you can take a counterfeit one hundred dollar bill, and you know what you can do with a counterfeit one hundred dollar bill? You can buy groceries with it and feed some hungry children. You know what you can do with a counterfeit one hundred dollar bill? You can pay the rent for a widow. You know what you can do with a one hundred dollar bill? You can get some medicine for a sick child. I’m talking about a counterfeit bill. It can do all of that. It can do a lot of good. But one day it’s spotted, it’s detected, and it’s turned over to the feds. And they feds don’t say, “We’re going to spare this bill because it did a lot of good. It fed some children, and it bought some medicine, and it paid a widow’s rent.” That counterfeit, fake, and phony bill is cast into the fire and burned, shredded or destroyed. We’re not going to be judged by the opinion of men, and very frankly, God

doesn't take a poll to see how popular anybody is. God says, "Are you true or are you false?"

## **Conclusion**

I know that some people say, "You know, Adrian, I just wish you weren't so political. I just wish you'd preach." I don't think you know my heart if you feel that way. I am heartbroken. And, very frankly, I have to admit that all the facts are not in and I'm not the judge, but I have an ominous feeling that we're on the threshold of a national crisis. And regardless of what other people may do, regardless of what the legal solution is, or the political solution, I just think it's time that God's people said, "What does God say about it?" What does God say about it?

Would you bow your heads with me in prayer? And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, not in a sense of smugness or self-righteousness, because Jesus said every one of us need to repent. Would you just say, "Lord search my heart, know me, try me, see if there be some wicked way in me." And then, would you pray for the leadership of our nation? And would you pray that in all of this horrendous mess that somehow God would be glorified either in mercy or judgment. I know that God had much rather forgive and cleanse than judge. And my pray for the President, for the Congress, for the leadership of our nation is that they would just come to our Lord and submit to Him. They may, they may not. But that is my prayer. Let's just pray for just a few moments. I'm just going to go over and sit down and pray and if you don't mind, we'll just take about five minutes. If you want to slip down on your knees and pray, that's fine. You want to come up here to one of these kneeling benches, that's fine. But I'm just telling you, we're in a crisis folks. We're in a crisis. Just kneel and pray, stand and pray, search your own heart. Pray for your home. Let God, the Holy Spirit lead. Don't pray with a sense of smugness or vindictiveness, but just pray.

# How to Be a Fully Committed Disciple of Jesus Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 28, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 14:25–35**

*“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”*  
LUKE 14:27

## Outline

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- I. Disciples Must Worship at Any Cost
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- II. Disciples Must Work at Any Cost
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- III. A Disciple Must War at Any Cost
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    1. Salt Preserves
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  - C. Salt Can Lose Its Potency

Conclusion

## Introduction

Amen. Well, we're in forty days of purpose, and our week now we're going to be centering on the word discipleship. Would you be finding Luke chapter 14 in the Word of God. As you're finding that, let me ask you a question. Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? Now, don't answer it, before we ask the second question. What is a disciple,

anyway? What is a disciple? If I were to ask you what is a disciple, what would you say?

Actually, the word disciple means a learner. Somebody who is a disciple of another learns from that person. But not only do they learn from him—listen carefully—they learn to be like him. Jesus called His disciples and He said two things. First of all, He said, “Come unto me,” okay, and then He said, “Come after me.” That is, follow me; be like I am.

Now, let’s look in the Word of God. Here’s a very pertinent passage of Scripture that tells us about discipleship. I’m reading Luke 14, verses 25 and following: “And there went great multitudes with him; and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple. Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

So, may I ask you a question? Are you listening? Do you have ears to hear or are you going to tune me out, because I am afraid, very seriously, I’m afraid when I start talking this morning about discipleship, some of you are going to say, “That is not for me.”

Now, we sing, “It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day. It pays every step of the way.” And it does, doesn’t it? It does, doesn’t it? Okay. Now, listen to me. It pays to serve Jesus. But pay close attention. It cost to serve Jesus. It cost every day. It cost every step of the way. If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you will not find it. Salvation is free; discipleship costs. Salvation is free. You cannot earn it. Too many of us have made discipleship too easy. We want an air-conditioned, upholstered, streamlined, cushy faith, but you’ll not find such in the Bible. Now, does that frighten you, does that scare you, does that bother you when I tell you that discipleship cost? It shouldn’t because, listen, it costs, but it is well worth it. Let me tell you something. The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness of cheap price has been forgotten. The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness of cheap price has been forgotten.

Have you ever bought anything on sale just because it was on sale, and after you got it you never really wanted it? Have you paid a dear price for something and loved it and been very grateful for it?

Now, here's what was happening in the life of Jesus. Look in verse 25: "And there went great multitudes with him..." Now, the crowds were there. Jesus was at the zenith of His popularity. Great crowds were thronging after Jesus Christ, but do you know what Jesus did? He thinned out the crowd. He didn't do some spectacular miracle to keep them coming. He didn't tell some, whimsical stories. He didn't lower the standards. But He turned to these crowds that were following Him, the throngs that were coming after Him, and He began to talk to them about discipleship.

Now, there's no fine print in His contract. When you come to Jesus, you need to come with eyes wide open. Now, I know that there are a lot of folks here on Sunday morning. You dress up in your finery and come to church, and I'm glad that you did, but you don't want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, there are people who think they're doing God a favor by coming to the worship service, they really do. They do not want to be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus calls us to be His disciple, He's calling us to something costly.

Garibaldi, who freed Italy from tyranny, got an army and, he went to recruit some young men, and they said to Garibaldi, said, "What do you offer?" He said, "Offer? I offer you hardship, hunger, rags, thirst, sleepless nights, foot sores, and long marches, privations innumerable, and victory in the noblest cause that ever asked you," and they followed him. What does Jesus offer you? Jesus is offering you victory, but not ease and not laziness.

There are four things in our passage that discipleship will cost you, and I want you to look at them and see if you still want to be a disciple.

## **I. Disciples Must Worship at Any Cost**

Disciples must worship at any cost. Look in verses 26 and 27. Jesus said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

### **A. At the Cost of Personal Relationships**

Now, what is the cost that Jesus is talking about? Well, there's the cost of personal relationships. He says you have to hate father and mother. Well, you say, "Now, wait a minute. And wife and children and brothers? I thought Jesus taught us to love, and this says we're to hate our father, our mother, our wives, our children, our brethren." Well, you have to understand how He uses the word hate. He doesn't use it to mean that we despise them. As a matter of fact, Jesus would never have taught us to break one of the

Ten Commandments, which says, “Honor your father and your mother.” The Bible teaches that we’re to love our wives and we’re to love our children. As a matter of fact, when you become a disciple of Jesus Christ, you’ll love your father and mother and brother and sister and, and children all the more. The word hate here speaks of a choice. You have to understand the way the Bible uses the word. It speaks of a clear choice. Put in your margin Matthew chapter 6, verse 24: “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” What He is saying is you have to make a clear choice. Now, the Bible uses the word hate in a different sense than we might use it today. What Jesus is saying is, “I must come before all human relationships.” Do you love Jesus Christ that much? I know that my wife loves Jesus more than she loves me. That doesn’t bother me because I know she can love me all the more by loving Jesus. But there comes a time sometimes when we have to make a choice. Those of us who put our children on airplanes and see them fly overseas to be missionaries know that they love us, but they love Jesus more, and so they say goodbye to do what Jesus would have them be.

### **B. At the Cost of Personal Reputation**

Do you want to be a disciple at the cost of personal relationships? Do you want to be, a disciple at the cost of personal reputation? He says in His own life. Now, most of us want fulfillment. Well, in a sense, we’re to be fulfilled when we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, but our personal ambitions have to be laid in the dust to follow Jesus Christ.

I wanted to be an architect or I wanted to be a lawyer. God called me to be a pastor. I’m infinitely glad that He did. But when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you have no plans of your own. You have to forsake yourself. Now, listen to me very carefully. There is a difference in self-denial and denial of self. You can have self-denial. You can say, “I’ll do without food. I’ll do without sleep. I’ll do without this or that.” That’s self-denial. But to deny self is far different. Simon Peter forsook his nets, but it was a long time before Simon Peter forsook Simon Peter.

### **C. At the Cost of Personal Realization**

Are you willing—listen to me—are you willing to take yourself off the throne and put Jesus Christ on the throne? If not, you can’t be a disciple. Personal relationships, friend, personal realization, and personal reputation, your own life. You have to lay all of that at the foot of the cross and then you bear His cross. Look at it. When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, that’s the last, the last personal, private decision you’ll ever make, your last independent decision when you come to Jesus Christ. From then on, you have to ask, “Jesus, what do You want me to do?”

Dr. A. W. Tozer, a great man of God, said this. Somebody asked Tozer, “What does

it mean to take up your cross?” and Tozer told a story of an old man, and here’s what he said. “One time, a young man came to an old saint who taught the deeper life, the crucified life, and said, ‘Father, what does it mean to be crucified?’ The old man thought for a moment and said, ‘Well, to be crucified means three things.’” Now, listen to this, folks. Here’s what it means to take up a cross. “First, the man who is crucified is facing only one direction.” That’s good. When you’re crucified, you’re only facing one direction. “The old man scratched his scraggily head and said, ‘One thing more, son, about the man on the cross. He is not going back. He has said his final goodbyes. Thirdly, he said, the man on the cross has no further plans of his own.’” Did you get that? He’s facing one direction. He’s not going back. He said goodbye. And he has no further plans of his own. Do you want to be a disciple? Now, this is what our Lord Jesus is saying. You must worship at any cost.

## **II. Disciples Must Work at Any Cost**

But, secondly, disciples must work at any cost. Look, if you will, now in verses 28 and following. Jesus goes on to talk, and He says, “Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”

### **A. The Life We Build Must Be Spiritually Conceived**

Now, Jesus is saying that a disciple is to be a disciple is not only a crucifixion, but a construction. You begin to build. Now, He likens our building to a tower. In this day, towers were put in the middle of vineyards, for protection, and, they were put there in the middle for fruitfulness. And your life is to be like a tower. Now, what is my life, therefore, to be? It is to be spiritually conceived. I don’t have a right to build whatever I want to build. I have to say, “Lord, what do You want me to build? I want You to be the architect of my life.”

### **B. The Life We Build Must Be Sacrificially Constructed**

But not only is it going to be spiritually conceived; it’s got to be sacrificially constructed. You count the cost. Again, there’s no easy way to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. To build is costly.

### **C. The Life We Build Must Be Steadfastly Completed**

And then, it has to be steadfastly completed. He said, “Don’t build a half-built tower, and then you quit, and then all the hordes of hell mock you and say, Look at that person. He started out to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. He’s no longer a disciple.”

I’m talking to some people today. You used to be faithful in Bible study, but you’re not today. You used to be a prayer warrior, but you’re no longer a prayer warrior. Some

of you made a commitment to tithe and you've stopped tithing. Some of you are erstwhile deacons who formerly served, but you don't serve anymore. You've put yourself out to pasture. There are some of you who were active church members somewhere, but you're not active today. You move from this city or that city and you come and visit around churches, but you say you just don't want to get tied down. Well, friend, when you get crucified, you're nailed down. You're nailed down. "I don't want to get tied down." What some people call shopping for a church is sheer laziness and a lack of commitment. You started to build and you've not finished. Your tower is to be, spiritually conceived and sacrificially completed. You are to finish the tower.

### **III. A Disciple Must War at Any Cost**

And then, not only disciples who worship at any cost and disciples who work at any cost, but you're to be a disciple who wars at any cost. This is a battle. We're called to a crucifixion, a construction, and then a conflict. Look in verses 30 and 31: "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage—that means an ambassador—and desireth conditions of, of peace."

#### **A. Jesus Wants Warriors Who Are Not Cowards**

Now, again, you're going to be at war with this world when you become a disciple of Jesus Christ. I was reading over in Matthew, just opened my Bible almost at random, sitting up, on the platform this morning, and I turned to Matthew 24, and Jesus said this: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye to another; for verily, I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." What Jesus is saying is, "If they persecute me, they're going to persecute you. You're going to be at war." You say, "Adrian, are you at war?" All the time—all the time. It is a battle. It is a conflict. And Jesus wants disciples, warriors, who are not cowards. We have ten thousand; they have twenty thousands. So what! "If God be for us, who can be against us." Amen? "If God be for us..." I like what that soldier said to his comrades. He said, "Men, we're surrounded by the enemy. Don't let any of them escape." "If God be for us, who can be against us."

#### **B. Jesus Wants Warriors Who Are Not Compromisers**

Soldiers who are not cowards, and soldiers who are not compromisers. You see, when we're cowards, we become compromisers. We send our some ambassador to make peace with the enemy. You can't make peace with the devil. You can't compromise with

sin.

General Douglas MacArthur of another era—some of you kids don't know who he was—a great American said, "In war, there is no substitute for victory." You cannot compromise.

A bear hunter went out to shoot a bear because he wanted a bear coat, a fur coat. He found his bear, drew his gun, pointed it at the bear, and the bear said, "Hold it right there. Don't pull that trigger. Come out here in the middle of the road and let's talk. Now, let's be reasonable about this thing. Look, you want a fur coat, is that right?" The man said, "That's right." He said, "Well, I want a good meal. That's all I want. You want the coat; I want the meal." When it was over, the bear had the meal and the man had a fur coat.

*You can't compromise with the devil. You don't sit down. God called us to be soldiers and not diplomats.*

### **C. Jesus Wants Warriors Who Are Not Cautious**

And then He's talking about, disciples who are not cowards, who are not compromisers, and who are not cautious. Look in verse 33: "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciples." Are you ready? Are you ready to get out of the boat with both feet and say, "Lord, whatever it cost, whatever it cost."

Joseph Tson, who spoke from this pulpit, a great man of God from Romania, I believe a modern-day apostle, was taken by the communists in Romania under the brutal, bitter regime of Ceausescu. Joseph was preaching and they couldn't put their control on him. Finally, one of the communist thugs called on Joseph and said, "Joseph, you'd better simmer down. You'd better get in line, because if you don't, there'll be repercussions." And Joseph said, "I know what you can do to me." He said, "I know you can kill me." And he said, "Killing is your chief weapon. And if you tell me that I must back down or stop preaching under the threat of death, you'll just have to kill me," but he said, "I want you to know this. Killing is your chief weapon; dying is mine." He said, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "If you kill me, you will sprinkle every sermon that I've ever preached with my blood, every tape that I have transcribed, every book that I've written that will be testimony that I believe what I believe enough to die for it, and it will only cause what I believe to be spread all the more. So I want to warn you—killing is your chief weapon; dying is mine. If you use yours, I'll be forced to use mine." They backed away and said, "Leave Joseph alone. He's crazy." But we have to be that way.

Friend, we cannot compromise. We cannot be cautious. We're at war. I don't know how many days, months, years we have, but the days call for a radical discipleship. Worshipers who will take up their cross and worship at any cost. Workers who will take up their tools and build at any cost. Warriors who will take up their weapons and fight at any cost. That's what a disciple is.

## **IV. A Disciple Must Witness at Any Cost**

And, finally, I want you to see here what a disciple is.

### **A. Salt Speaks of Witness and Testimony**

A disciple is a witness who will witness at any cost. Look, if you will, in verses 34 and 35: “Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savor—that means its tang, its bite, its saltiness—wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Now, Jesus has been talking about a crucifixion. He’s been talking about a construction. He’s been talking about a conflict. And now He talks about a commission.

### **B. A True Disciple Will Be Like Salt**

We are the salt of the earth. And Jesus here is talking about a disciple who is a witness. Now, we are the salt of the earth. But salt sometimes can lose its saltiness. We’ll talk about that. What does salt do?

#### **1. Salt Preserves**

Well, salt preserves. Jesus was speaking to fishermen when He called them. He said, “Come after me. I’ll make you to be fishers of men.” They knew what salt did. Salt kept the fish from spoiling. And what we need in America today, what we need in Memphis today is some salt. America definitely needs the preserving power of the salty gospel of Jesus Christ.

Think, for example, about the sin of sodomy. Sodomy has gone in our world and in our nation from a sin to a sickness to a socially accepted practice to now to a virtue. Where are the prophets of God? Where are disciples who will stand up and say, “Right is right and wrong is wrong, regardless, regardless.” Salt preserves. In America, love is forsaken for lust. It seems that Satan is worshipped as a saint and man is magnified above his maker. Your pastor’s here to tell you that the only hope for America today is more salt. The problem is not with the pornographers. The problem is not with the drug pushers. The problem is not with crooked politicians. The problem is not with Hollywood. The problem is in this auditorium today, that we have failed to be salty saints. We have failed to be true disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Salt preserves. And there’s no hope for America unless we have the preserving salt.

#### **2. Salt Flavors**

I’ll tell you what else salt does. Salt flavors. Salt flavors. Job 6, verse 6: “Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt?” A little boy was, asked what is salt. He said, “Salt is what tastes bad when you don’t have it.” Yeah, you need salt to flavor, to bring out the flavor. So many of us are living bland lives, tasteless lives, insipid, in, lives. When you go to work tomorrow, is there a zest and a flavor in your life? What is there about you

that is so different that that person you work next to can see the difference? Somebody said, “With most of us, it’s the bland leading the bland.”

### **3. Salt Heals**

Now, salt also heals. When little babies were born in Bible times, they would rub them with salt. Elisha cast some salt into a bitter spring and healed the waters. Salt is an antiseptic. I’ve seen it heal broken hearts and broken hopes and broken homes. We need to be salty disciples.

### **4. Salt Penetrates**

Salt penetrates. You take just a pinch of salt and put it in a jug of water, and the entire jug will be instantaneously salty.

You know the problem with many of us? We’ve just taken our churches and they become kinds of holy saltshakers, and we sit in here and salt the salt. Jesus said you’re the salt of the world, the salt of the earth. He didn’t say you’re the salt of the church. Salt penetrates. Listen. We need to be separate from sin, but not isolated from sinners. How many of you have unsaved friends that you’re being salt to? How many of you are getting out and, and penetrating the society? Salt penetrates.

#### **C. Salt Can Lose Its Potency**

But salt can lose its saltiness. Most of the salt in Bible times came from the Dead Sea. And they would take it from the Dead Sea and the sun would shine upon it, but after a while, if it rained on that salt and stayed, too long that way, the salt would leak out and leave noxious chemicals. And, not only was it not, did it have no zest, it had no bite, but it was actually dangerous. If you put it on the fields, it would kill the crops. If you put it down a well, it would poison the water. But they found one good thing for the salt. They could put it on the roads. It would absorb the moisture. It would harden down. Nothing would grow on it. It was good for nothing but to be trampled under foot. Jesus said if we lose our tang, that’s what we are: good for nothing.

Do you know why people are walking on the church today? Do you know why it is open season on Christians today? Do you know why we’re mocked on television—that we’re laughed at in society? Because we’ve lost our saltiness, that’s why. We do not witness at any cost. We are salt that has lost its savor, and the world tramples upon us.

## **Conclusion**

Now, I’m aware that the message today has been a challenge, and I’m finished with the message. But I want to ask you again, we’re talking about forty days of purpose. And one of the purposes of life is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Jesus said, “Come after me.” Do you want to come after Him? Jesus’ path led to Calvary. Jesus was selfless. Jesus is the eternal warrior. Jesus is the

soul winner. What we need, ladies and gentlemen, look at your pastor now. Don't check me out. We need worshipers who will worship at any cost. Will you? Hey, I'm talking to you. Will you? Don't check me out. Will you? Worshipers who will worship at any cost. Workers who will build at any cost. Warriors who will fight at any cost. Witnesses who will witness at any cost. Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? You say, "Well, pastor, I don't know that I do." Well, you'll be like so many who heard Him speak and turned and went away. But I want to tell you again, there's no fine print in the contract. Great multitudes were following Him, and He turned and began to talk to them about genuine discipleship.

May I make a confession to you? That as I prepared this message, God spoke to my own heart, and God said, "Adrian, you need to move up one step higher, and you need to come in one step closer." That's what I want to do. That's what I hope you want to do.

Now, I'm going to give an invitation here for people to give their hearts to Jesus Christ, and I want to tell you that if you'll put your faith where God has put your sins, God will save you. You're not saved by your sacrifice. You're not saved by your good living. You're saved by the precious death of Jesus on the cross. And Jesus will save you today instantaneously and He will keep you eternally if you'll give Him your heart and your life. But once He saves you, the desire of your heart should be to be a genuine disciple of Jesus.

Some of you here today don't have a church. You're saved. I'm going to invite you to come forward and place your membership here. Well, you say, "Pastor, I don't want to be a member of a church that preaches that kind of a standard." Fine. Find another church. You set the bar anywhere you want and somewhere you'll find a church that will accommodate you. But if you want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and you want to help me and others to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, I want to invite you to come forward today and say, "I want to place my membership here." Those of you who don't yet know Jesus, I want you to come and say, "I want to give my heart to Jesus. I want to be saved." You say, "I've never done that. How, what should I say?" Just come and say, "I need Jesus," or, "I want to be saved." We'll take a Bible and guide you in this decision. A man of God will be standing at the head of each of these aisles all away across the front to receive those of you who come. If you're in the balcony, someone will be waiting to receive you standing under that banner over there that says Redeemer up there in that corner, or the one that says Messiah up here. You just move that direction. Now, the devil will give you a thousand and one excuses for not coming, but he can't give you any reason.

Father God, I pray now that You'll touch in this invitation and that many will say yes to Christ. In His name I pray.

Let's stand together. You step out and come.

# How to Be a Fully Committed Disciple of Jesus Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 28, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 14:25–35**

*“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”*  
LUKE 14:27

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, that ought to be the prayer of all of us. We're talking today about discipleship. We've been in forty days of purpose. We've talked about worship. We've talked about fellowship. And today, discipleship. This entire week we're going to be studying

discipleship, and I want to talk to you today about how to be a fully committed disciple of Jesus Christ, a fully committed disciple of Jesus Christ.

Well, what does it mean to you to be a disciple? Are you a disciple? The word disciple means learner. The Latin word *percipio* means to learn. Now, a disciple is a learner. You can be a disciple of anyone, but to be a disciple of Jesus is to let Jesus teach you. Okay? So far, so good. Jesus said, “Come unto me,” now listen, and then He said, “Come after me.” That is, follow me. A disciple is someone who learns from his teacher, his master, and then—this is very important—becomes like his master.

Would you like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Now, before you answer, let me let you the answer is not as easy as you may think. Discipleship costs. Salvation is free, but discipleship costs. Are you willing to pay the price? Now we sing, “It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day, it pays every step of the way.” And it does, doesn’t it? If I had a thousand lives, I’d give them all to Jesus. It pays over and over and over and over and over again. I’m always in debt to the Lord Jesus. But may I be honest and tell you, it costs to serve Jesus. It costs every day. It costs every step of the way.

And today, we want an air-conditioned, upholstered, streamline faith. Many of us don’t want to pay the price.

Turn to Luke chapter 14, Luke chapter 14. Get in the gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Come to chapter 14 and then look in verse 25: “And there went great multitudes with him; and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” Now, think about this: The crowds were following Jesus. Jesus had great multitudes. He was at the zenith of His ministry, His popularity, and all these people were clamoring after Him. Now, what does He do? He thins out the crowd. He doesn’t do some sensational miracle to get more followers. He doesn’t water down his teaching with user-friendly evangelism. What He does is turns to them and in the sternest terms possible He talks to them about something that seems almost shocking. “If any man come after me and hate not his father, and his mother, ha, ha, his wife, and his children, and his brethren, he can’t be my disciple.” Well, one thing you have to say about the Lord Jesus Christ, there’s no fine print in the contract, amen? He’s not mislabeling it. There’s no bait and switch. He’s not looking for easy followers. I know that many times today in our churches we have watered down the gospel in an attempt to gain more followers. Jesus never did that, nor will I, nor should we. When you follow Jesus, He’s not inviting you to share in His popularity, but His unpopularity. Are you willing to do that? Does that make sense to you? Well, I trust that it will.

Let me tell you four things that a true disciple of Jesus Christ is. Then I hope you’ll say, “I want to pay the price because it’s worth it.” Now, listen. Before you make up your mind, may I tell you this? The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness

of cheap price has been forgotten. That's true about anything. You buy something because it's on sale, and it's not any good, you don't want it. You don't remember, that you got it for cheap; you just remember you don't like it. You don't like it. The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness of cheap price has been forgotten. Is that not true? But if you pay a price for something, you work for it, you earn it, you pay a price for it, and it is something that you value and you treasure, you soon forget the price because you say, "It was worth it." There's no cheap discipleship. It costs to serve Jesus. It costs every day. But, friend, it is worth it. Now, I'm aware that there are some who won't pay the price. I believe there are some people who would give up following Jesus before they would give up getting a new refrigerator. That's how careless they are, how flippant they are. Now, people think they've God a great favor when they come and sit in church on Sunday morning. They call that serving the Lord. Well, I'm glad that you're here, but serving the Lord goes far beyond that.

## **I. A Disciple Must Worship at Any Cost**

Four things that discipleship means, and I want you to see them here in this passage of Scripture. Jesus wants disciples that will worship at any cost. Go back, if you will, to verse 26. Jesus said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

### **A. At the Cost of Personal Relationships**

Again, there's no fine print here in the contract. Jesus Christ must come before personal relationships. You're called upon to hate father, mother, wife, children, and brethren. You say, "Now, wait a minute, pastor. I thought Jesus taught us to love." Well, He does teach us to love. As a matter of fact, Jesus here is not breaking the commandment that tells us to honor father and mother. Jesus is not telling us to hate our children. If you love Jesus, you're going to love your father and mother more. If you love Jesus, you're going to love your wife more. If you love Jesus, you're going to love your children more. The word hate here is used in the Bible sense in comparison, or as Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters..." He will love one and hate the other. Now, if you're working for Texaco, it doesn't mean that you hate Exxon. That's not what He's talking about, not in the sense, but He's just saying, "You can't serve two masters." Are you going to work for one oil company, or are you going to work for the other? And so, He's using the word here to mean choice. What he is saying is that Jesus Christ must come before any other personal relationship. Joyce knows that she's number two in my life, not number one. She doesn't mind being number two because she knows that I love her more making her number two than I ever could making her number one. My children know that I love

them with all of my heart, but they know they're not number one. You see, what our Lord is saying is that if you're going to be a, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you're going to be His disciple, He must be number one in your life. Is Jesus Christ number one in your life?

Joyce and I have put a child on a shiny airplane to fly overseas with our grandchild and his lovely wife to go to be missionaries in Spain. And I know that David loves us. I know that Kelly loves her parents. I know that. And my own personal flesh would be to have my children and my grandchildren here with me. But I know that my children love Jesus Christ more than they love me. That doesn't bother me. That thrills me to know that. Do you love Jesus Christ more than personal relationships? You must if you'll be His disciple.

### **B. At the Cost of Personal Reputation**

And not only personal relationships, but personal reputation. "And his own life also..." Now, you're not even to love you more than you love the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ you have to take yourself off the throne and enthrone Jesus Christ.

### **C. At the Cost of Personal Realization**

In many modern churches today the theme is what? Fulfill yourself. Self-realization. Self-fulfillment, and our churches have become sort of a cafeteria line, where we just go by and pick up things that are going to make us feel better about ourselves. Now, I hope that you have a good self-image, a healthy self-image, but if it comes between Adrian and Jesus, I must say no to Adrian and yes to Jesus Christ. Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to say, "Lord Jesus, I put You first, in spite of my own reputation, my own fulfillment, what people think of me?" You see, a cross. Jesus is going to talk a little bit about picking up a cross. Now, many people have a cross, a gold ornament, around their neck, and there's nothing wrong with that that I can see. But, friend, a cross is not a thing of beauty. A cross is a thing, ultimately, of shame and reproach. That's what it meant in Jesus' day when He said, "Pick up your cross."

When I was in college, I took a course in criminology, and we visited, our penitentiary there in Florida, Raiford Penitentiary. And I went into the room there where they had the electric chair. I sat down in the electric chair. I checked the switch and everything to see no one was standing over there. But I, I sat down in the electric chair. Got up and looked at it, tried to image what it would be like to sit in that chair knowing that someone behind that panel is ready to pull the switch. And that chair was hideous. It was ugly. Can you image somebody with an electric chair on a chain around their neck, a little miniature electric chair?

Well, the cross, we have made it sort of a piece of jewelry, but when a person comes

to Jesus Christ, he is a worshiper who will worship at any cost, personal relationships, personal reputation. To take up your cross is a mark of shame. Now, somebody says, "Well, my sickness is my cross." Not unless you got it by serving Jesus. You say, "My mother-in-law's my cross." She may be cross, but she's not your cross. A cross is something that you willingly take up. You don't have to bear it. Jesus said, "No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself." To follow Jesus is a worshiper who worships at any cost, above the cost of personal relationships, above the cost of personal reputation, above the cost of personal realization.

Somebody asked Dr. Tozer, "What does it mean to take up your cross? What does it mean to be crucified with Christ?" He said, "Three things. Number one: a man who is crucified is facing only one way. Number two: a man who is crucified is not going back. He has said goodbye. He is not going back. And number three: he has no further plans of his own." Take up your cross, facing one way, not going back, no further plans of his own. Can you say it, "I'm crucified with Christ?" We say it glibly. Do you mean it? That's what it means to be a disciple. Still want to be a disciple? Take up your cross. That's what the Lord Jesus Christ said. My precious friend, when you gave your heart to Jesus Christ and said, "I will take up my cross," that's the last legitimate, independent decision you ever make. There, from now on, your life belongs to Jesus Christ. You, you're not your own. You are bought with a price. Now, what a disciple is, number one, is a worshiper who worships at any cost. Got it? Okay. Now, let's look number two.

## **II. A Disciple Must Work at Any Cost**

Disciples not only must worship at any cost, but they must work at any cost. Take your Bibles now and begin reading in verse 28: Jesus goes on to explain, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

### **A. The Life We Build Must Be Spiritually Conceived**

Now, why does He mention a tower? Well, back in these days they had vineyards, and in the middle of the vineyard they would put a tower. And the tower was there to protect the vineyard and, therefore, it was there for fruitfulness. And, God says our lives are to be like a tower. Now, you see, He speaks, first of all, about a crucifixion, and now He speaks of a construction, because it's not all negative; it's all so positive. Our Lord has called us to build. Our Lord has a plan for my life, for your life, and my life is to be constructed by His plan. The tower is to be spiritually conceived. Again, I don't have any right to say, "Lord, what do You want me to do with my life?" When I started out as a kid, I thought I wanted to be a lawyer or an architect, but I laid those plans aside

because God called me to be a minister. God called me to preach.

### **B. The Life We Build Must Be Sacrificially Constructed**

I want my tower to be spiritually conceived. And then I want it to be sacrificially constructed. Jesus said, “If you’re going to build a tower, count the cost.” You want to be a disciple—count the cost. If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way, forget it. That’s what most people want.

### **C. The Life We Build Must Be Steadfastly Completed**

But not only spiritually conceived, sacrificially, constructed, but steadfastly completed. He says, “Count the cost so you’ll be able to finish the tower.”

Do you know the problem in America today? We have so many half-built towers that are causing people to laugh and mock. Men who’ve said they were called into the ministry, they’re no longer in the ministry. Deacons who are no longer serving as deacons. Sunday school teachers who once had a class of boys and you don’t teach that class of boys any more. Well, why don’t you teach that class of boys? “Well, if you knew that class of boys, you’d know why I don’t teach them any more. I’ve never seen such bad boys.” Well, who do you think needs a Sunday school teacher except bad boys? That’s why God is there. Some who used to tithe, you don’t tithe. Some who used to be Bible students, you’ve stopped studying the Bible. Some who used to be prayer warriors. Do you know what you are? You’re a half-built tower. You have not finished the task. Jesus said, “No man putting his hand to the plow and looketh back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Now, what we need, what a disciple is is a worshiper who will worship at any cost. What a disciple is is a worker who will build at any cost. He will not, back away. He will not stop. Disciples worship at any cost. Disciples work at any cost.

## **III. A Disciple Must War at Any Cost**

And now, disciples war at any cost. Look, if you will, now in verse 31, and He says this: “And what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great well off, great way off, he sendeth an ambassage and desireth conditions of peace.”

Now, notice what our Lord is doing. First of all, He speaks of a crucifixion. Then He speaks of a construction. And now He speaks of a conflict, a war. You see, when I follow the Lord Jesus Christ, I follow Jesus into battle. There’s a war and it is a fight to the death, and you’re on one side or the other. You cannot be neutral. And so far as the odds are concerned, we’re outnumbered. We’re the master’s minority. In the parable that Jesus gives, or the question that Jesus gives, it’s ten thousand against twenty

thousand. That's 2 to 1, except the favor is still on our side because "If God be for us, who can be against us." But what we need are warriors who are not cowards.

#### **A. Jesus Wants Warriors Who Are Not Cowards**

Are you willing, truly, to, to go into the battle? Many of us want to get unscarred, criticized. Many businessmen will not stand up against gambling because they're afraid it'll hurt their business. Many will not witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, in, in, their offices because they're afraid it may not be politically correct. That is, they'll crucify Jesus on a cross of gold. They're cowards.

#### **B. Jesus Wants Warriors Who Are Not Compromisers**

We need warriors, disciples, who are not cowards and disciples who are not compromisers. Our Lord said, "If you don't count the cost when the battle gets thick, what you're going to do is to send out an ambassador to try and make peace with the enemy." Who is the enemy? He is the devil. Do you think you can negotiate with the devil? Do you think you can appease him, or buy him off, or you can come to some sort of a standoff with the devil? Forget it.

General Douglas MacArthur said, "In war, there is no substitute for victory." That is so true, ladies and gentlemen. In this life there is no substitute for victory over the devil. Now, if you tried to have a peace treaty with the devil, he's going to beat you. Either you get him or he'll get you, but there's no such thing as neutrality.

I've oft told the story of a bear hunter went out one time to hunt a bear. He found a bear, got him in the sights, started to squeeze the trigger, but the bear said, "Hold it, hold it, hold it, hold it. Don't pull that trigger. Let's go out here in the middle of the road. You put the gun down and let's talk. Let's reason this thing out. Why are you hunting? You want a fur coat, isn't that right?" The hunter said, "That's right." He said, "Why am I out here in the woods? I want a good meal. Can you understand that?" The hunter said, "Yes." The bear said, "Let's talk it over." They did, and when it was finished, the bear had a good meal and the man had a fur coat.

That's the way the devil is. He says, "Now, let's just see if we can't compromise here a little bit here with sin."

#### **C. Jesus Wants Warriors Who Are Not Cautious**

What our Lord wants is disciples who are not cowards—ten thousand against twenty thousands. What our Lord wants are disciples who are not compromisers, sending out ambassadors to sit down with the devil. And what He wants is disciples who are not cautious. Listen. When you go into battle, you have to go in with all of your heart and soul. Look in this passage of Scripture right down, oh, let's say in verse 32, 33: "Likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciples." You say, "Well, Lord, I'll give you something." He doesn't want something.

You say, “Lord, I’ll give you prominence.” He doesn’t want prominence. He deserves and a man’s pre-eminence, all that he has.

Let me ask you a question. It’s a rhetorical question, so don’t answer it out loud. Does Jesus Christ have everything that you have? Is there any part of your life that is out of bounds to the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there anything that you would say, “Now, Lord Jesus, take your hands off of that?” If there is, you cannot be His disciple. Didn’t I tell you that discipleship costs? It costs to serve Jesus. It costs everyday. It costs every step of the way.

You see, there must be worshipers who worship at any cost, “Take up your cross.” There must be workers who work at any cost, “Take up your tools.” There, there must be warriors who war at any cost, “Take up your sword.” He cannot use cowards. He cannot use compromisers. He cannot use cautious people. We need a reckless, burning, blazing, emotional, passionate love for Jesus Christ. We do. I want to be that kind of disciple.

#### **IV. A Disciple Must Witness at Any Cost**

Then, last of all, what our Lord wants are witnesses who will witness at any cost. Look, if you will, now. Disciples must witness at any cost. Luke 14, beginning in verse 34: “Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savor—that is, its tang, its zest—wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear let him hear.”

Our Lord knew that some people would not listen to this. Some people have no ears for what I’m preaching this morning. They’re saying, “I didn’t come to hear a message like that. I came to be made to feel good, to be petted, to be praised, to be flattered, but not to be challenged.” But notice what our Lord does. Our Lord speaks, first of all, about a crucifixion, then a construction, then a conflict, and now a commission.

##### **A. Salt Speaks of Witness and Testimony**

We’re like salt. We are the salt of the earth. And that means we’re to witness. That’s what salt does. Salt speaks of witness and testimony. Now, think about what salt does. Salt preserves. Jesus called fishermen to follow Him to be His disciples. They, they didn’t refrigerate their fish. They couldn’t. They salted their fish down. It is salt that preserves.

May I tell you that America needs the preserving salt of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Folks, the problem in America is not the drug dealer, not the pornographer, not Hollywood, not the liberal theologian; the problem is saltless saints, people who will not be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

America is in a moral meltdown. Sodomy has gone from a sin, to a sickness, to a socially accepted, practice, to a virtue here in America at our watch. Families are

unraveling. Standards are lowered. The entertainment industry has reached the bottom of the garbage pail. It's like a sewer has broken on America. And we need something to de, decontaminate our land. Do you know what it is? It is salt.

## **B. What Does Salt Do?**

Jesus said you are the salt of the earth.

### **1. Salt Preserves**

It is salt that preserves.

### **2. Salt Flavors**

It is salt that flavors. Is there something about your life that's different? They asked a little boy, "What is salt?" He said, "Salt tastes bad when you don't have it." That's what it is. It makes the potatoes taste bad when it ain't there. Is there zest about your life? Can your neighbors see something different about you, or are you just bland and tasteless and flab bard and placid and just a person with no zest in your life?

Why would anybody want to have my faith? Why would anybody want to be like me if he cannot see a change in me? Paul said in Colossians 4, verse 6: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Salt seasons.

### **3. Salt Heals**

Salt heals. Salt is an antiseptic and it heals. And our world is sick. I've seen the salt of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ heal broken hearts and broken hopes and broken homes. Our world needs salty saints.

### **4. Salt Burns**

I'll tell you something else, though. Salt burns. It stings. You rub the salt into an open wound and the person will say, "Ouch, that burns, that stings." We're going to irritate some people. No irritation, then it's lost its saltiness. Friend, no offense, no effect. We need to stop trying to win popularity contests. No everybody is going to love you if you follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said over there in Matthew chapter 10 that the disciple is not better than his master. "If they've hated me, they will hate you." If you are salty, you're going to be an irritant.

### **5. Salt Penetrates**

Salt penetrates. You can take just a pinch of salt and put it in a jug of water and the whole jug will become salty. Salt, penetrates. It, it just permeates everything that you put it in.

May I tell you what the problem in Memphis, Tennessee is, and what the problem is in America? We have Christians, just like you wonderful folks today, these in the choir and these on the platform, and we come to church and, and we hear sermons. And you know what we do? We salt the salt. We're salting one another. You don't salt salt. Jesus

didn't say you're the salt of the church. He said you're the salt of the earth. Now, should we lead separate lives? Should we be separated? Yes. Separate from sinners, but not isolated from sinners. Do you know why they crucified Jesus? Because He was a friend of sinners. That's why they nailed Him up on the cross. Do you know what this church needs to do? Friend, we need to get out of the saltshaker. We need to get out in our community as genuine disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **C. Salt May Lose Its Potency**

You know, Jesus said, "If salt loses its saltiness—He said this in the Sermon on the Mount—"If salt loses its saltiness, it's good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men." They got their saltiness, Dave, from the Dead Sea, and sometimes the salt lying out on the ground would get the rain and the elements would fall on it, and the tang, the zest, the bite would leach out and poisonous chemicals would be left. You couldn't put it on the food. It was poisonous. If you put it in the fields, it would kill the crops. If you put it down the well, it would contaminate the water. But they found one good thing for that kind of salt, salt that was no longer salty. You know what they did with it? They put it on the roads. Why? Because it would pack down, it would absorb moisture, and the weeds would not grow in it. And so, they put it on the roads. It was good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men.

Do you know why, in modern sitcoms, Christians now are being made fun of? Do you know why it's open season on Christians? Do you know why we're laughed at? Do you know why we're ridiculed? Do you know why we're overlooked? Do you know why we're lampooned? Do you know why sometimes we are persecuted? I'll tell you why. We've lost our saltiness. It's no wonder they walk on us. We're good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men.

## **Conclusion**

Are you tired of that? Would you like to see it turned around? Would you like to see it different? Would you like to see the name of Jesus Christ lifted up? Would you like to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, a disciple who witnesses at any cost, a disciple who works at any cost, a disciple who wars at any cost, a disciple who witnesses at any cost? I, for one, want to be that kind of a disciple. I don't know how many more years I have to live, and I don't know how, know how many more days we have till Jesus comes, but I don't want to be just drawing my breath and drawing my salary, fighting to live while I live to fight. I want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Somebody said, "In order for a person to be happy, they have to have something to believe in, someone to love, and a cause to serve." Something to believe in, someone to love, and a cause to serve. That's Jesus. I believe Him. I love Him. I want to be a fully

committed disciple of Jesus Christ.

Let's all stand right now. Just stand up where you are. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. And today, if you've never given your heart to Jesus Christ, I'm going to ask you to do it. Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And let me lead you in a prayer. And in this prayer you can ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart. Remember what we told you that salvation is free? There's nothing to earn. There's a lot to learn, but there's nothing to earn. You can, right now, become as saved as the apostle Paul just by receiving Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. And if you're not saved, would you pray this prayer in your heart silently, but fervently, Dear God, I need You and I want You. Jesus, You died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. Come into my heart. Come in right now. Forgive my sin. I turn from my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus. Now, friend, pray it. Pray it sincerely from the depth of your heart. Save me, Jesus. Pray it and mean it. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then, boldly by faith pray this way: Thank You for doing it. I have received it by faith and that settles it. You are now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and Friend. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage right now to make this public. Help me not to be ashamed of You. Today, give me the courage to make it public because I love You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to be standing at the heads of each of these aisles to welcome those of you who will come. And if you're in the balcony, there'll be a minister standing under that banner over there that says Redeemer, or one under this banner over here that says Messiah for those of you in the balcony as you come. You just be moving that way. And as you come, when you come, if you come to the minister just down here or up there, just say, if you prayed with me that prayer to receive Jesus, just say, "I'm trusting Jesus." We'll rejoice with you, give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions, and seal it in prayer, and you can go home today a child of God, twice born, heaven born and heaven bound. If you really meant it, make it public. There's something about coming forward that settles it and seals it. It shames the devil and gives glory to God. I'm going to ask you to do it. Don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You come if you're the only one that comes. I'm trusting many will come. Then there are other dear people here today who need a church home, and you're saying, "Pastor, that's the kind of a church home I want. I don't want to just play church. I want to be a fully committed disciple of Jesus Christ." Then I'm going to ask you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here." We'll tell you how you may become a member. Now, when I say a fully committed disciple of Jesus Christ, I don't mean you're going to be perfect. I am light years from perfection, but my goal is to be a fully committed disciple of Jesus Christ. So I'm going to ask you if that's your goal and

this is the kind of a church that you want to be a part of... We're not looking for mere joiners. This is a church, not a club. But if you're saying, "I want to be a part," then I'm going to ask you to come. And when you come, you say, "I want to place my membership here." Some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus." Others are saying, "I want to place my membership here." Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave unless it is an emergency. Be in a spirit of prayer. If you're with a friend who needs to come forward, you may invite that friend to come forward with you.

Let's stand, let's, let's sing together right now. You step out and come.

# It Costs to Serve Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 31, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 14:25–35**

## Outline

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- I. There Is a Death to Die
  - A. Jesus First: Before Personal Relationships
  - B. Jesus First: Before Personal Reputation
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- II. There Is a Cost to Consider
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- III. There Is a Foe to Face
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- IV. There Is a Savior to Share
  - A. Salt Seasons
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  - C. Salt Irritates
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  - E. Salt Heals

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, take your Bibles and turn to Luke 14, would you, please. We're going to begin our reading in verse 25—Luke 14, and in just a moment we'll start in verse 25.

When I was in high school, someone put on the bulletin board in high school a petition, and the purpose of that petition was to petition the school administration that we might have longer lunch hour and that we might have longer time between classes, that school would start later in the day, and that it would get out earlier, and that we would have less homework, and so forth and so on. It was a beautifully written petition, but it went on and on and on and on. And it said at the top of that petition, "If you desire these things and request these things, would you put your name at the bottom." There was a long list of names signed at the bottom of that petition. But in almost the last paragraph it said this: "And if these requests are granted, I agree to be decapitated next

week at thus-and-such a time.” And for you young people, that means “to have your head cut off.” And a number of students had read the top part, but they’d not read the bottom part. And so they were willingly, obviously, to have longer recess, and longer lunch, and to get there a little later—they were willing to have their heads cut off in order to have that done. Now, the truth of the matter is they didn’t want their heads cut off, but they had not read the fine print.

Now, there’s one thing you can say about the Lord Jesus—and it is this: that there’s no fine print in His contract. The Lord Jesus puts it all up front. He doesn’t hide anything. He doesn’t just go around painting the clouds with sunshine and letting us believe that if we serve Him there will be no cost. I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: “It Costs to Serve Jesus.” Now we often sing, “It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day, it pays every step of the way.” But I want to tell you, dear friend, there’s another side to it—and it costs to serve Jesus.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 25: *“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”* And then He goes on to say, *“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* (Luke 14:25–25)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, Jesus had a great crowd following Him. But Jesus did not want a crowd following Him under false pretenses. And it’s almost as if He is trying to preach the crowd away. The multitudes, when they saw the miracles that He did, when they heard the marvelous teaching that He did, they just flocked after Him. But Jesus put it all up front, and Jesus is saying to them, “It costs to be a disciple.” Jesus presents to them the demands of discipleship.

And I want to do the same tonight. I want us to look again and see what the Savior says will be true in my life and in your life if I’m to be His disciple, if I’m to follow Him,

because we're going to have in just a few moments the marvelous, wonderful, celebration of our Lord's Supper. But I want you as you take these elements into your hand that signify that you're part of His body and a partaker of His blood and of His flesh, I want you to understand, dear friend, the demands of discipleship. I want you to understand that it costs to be a Christian.

Now, there are four things that Jesus mentions here if we would be His disciple, if we would come after Him.

## **I. There Is a Death to Die**

And the first of all is this: If we would follow Jesus—if we would be His disciple, if we would come after Him—first of all, there is a death to die. Look again, if you will, in verse 26: *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”* I preached several Sundays back that to bear your cross does not mean to carry around a wooden crossbeam on your back. It does not mean that you have some sickness that you can't help. It doesn't mean that you have some relationship that you can't get out of. When a person took up his cross, he was going to die. That's what it means to bear your cross. It means to have your own personal Gethsemane and then to have your own personal Calvary. You cannot be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ if you're not willing to die. When Jesus calls a man, He calls a man this way: “Come and die. And if you're not willing to do that, forget about being a disciple of the Lord Jesus.”

You say, “Well, I don't want to die.” Well then, you'll not be His disciple. It costs to serve Jesus. It costs every day. It costs every step of the way. A younger Christian one time went up to a saint who had walked many years with the Lord and had preached what it meant and had taught what it meant to live a crucified life. And the younger Christian asked this old saint and warrior of the cross, “What does it really mean to take up your cross? What does it really mean to be crucified with Christ? What does a cross mean?” He said, “Well, let me think about it,” and he mused and thought for a few moments. Then he said, “Well, let me tell you what it means. It means, first of all, that when a man is crucified, when he's nailed on a cross, he can only face one way; he can't look back. There's no looking back. He is nailed in a fixed position. Secondly, when a man is crucified, when he is nailed to that cross, there's no turning back, as well as no looking back. He is in a position of commitment and he has bid goodbye to this world.” He said, “Thirdly, when a man is crucified, he has no further plans of his own. Someone else has made his plans for him.”

Now I want to ask you this question: Are you facing resolutely in one direction to say,

“I’ll follow the Lord Jesus, Him only, and Him always”? I want to ask you another question: Are you in such a position that you refuse ever to go back? When we baptized you, perhaps the choir sang, “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back.” There’s a word that you young married people ought to just cut out of your dictionary, and that’s the word *divorce*. You ought not even to use it. It ought not even to be a thought. It ought not to even be an option. And so it is with serving the Lord Jesus. There is not even an option, not even a thought, not even a scintilla of an idea that some day you might not serve Him. You are committed to Him. You have no plans of your own. From now on, your life belongs to Jesus. You’re not your own, for you are bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

### **A. Jesus First: Before Personal Relationships**

Now, let’s look at that a little more closely. For example, Jesus Christ and His will must come before personal relationships. Look in verse 26: *“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters...he cannot be my disciple.”* Now, Jesus here is speaking relatively—no pun intended. But He’s speaking relatively. He is not saying that we should not love our families. As a matter of fact, He teaches us to love our families. As a matter of fact, you cannot really love your family until you love the Lord Jesus. And if you love the Lord Jesus, you will not love your family less; you will love your family more. But what He is saying is that my, “Your love for me is to be so strong and so great that in comparison to your love for anybody else it will seem as though it were hate. That is, if a choice ever has to be made, than I must come first, regardless of the cost.”

I want to tell you, there’s no doubt in my mind about the fact that I believe that Joyce loves me deeply. I believe that I’m number one in her life of all the people on the face of this earth. I don’t doubt that for one moment. I believe my wife loves me enough that she would willingly die for me. I love her that way. I cannot tell you how deeply I love Joyce and how grateful to God I am for the wife that God has given me. But I know that I know that I’m second in Joyce’s life when it comes to her love for the Lord. And she knows that I love the Lord more than I love her. Now that doesn’t mean that I love her less. It really means that I love her more. And I want to tell you I am secure knowing that in my relationship to Joyce that I am number two.

### **B. Jesus First: Before Personal Reputation**

Jesus, my friend, must come before any personal relationship. But not only that: Jesus must come before personal reputation. To die on a cross is a mark of shame. *“Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”* (Galatians 3:13) The Bible says that Jesus “endured the shame,” (Hebrews 12:2) that, “He made Himself of no reputation, took

upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a servant, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:7–8) How ignominiously Jesus died!

### C. Jesus First: Before Personal Realization

And so, what Jesus is saying is that I must come not only before personal relationships, but I must come before personal reputation. I don't have a right to seek my own praise, my own reputation. I must be willing to live any way and do anything so long as Jesus Christ gets the glory. Thirdly, not only must Jesus come before my personal relationships, and my personal reputation; Jesus must come before my personal realization. He goes on to say, “...and his own life also.” I cannot have ambitions of my own. I cannot choose whether I shall be a pastor in this church or that church; whether, like Carey, I shall be a missionary or not be a missionary. I must simply say, “Lord, it is not my life; it is your life.”

I am grateful that God has called me to be the pastor of this church. I cannot believe that I have the joy, the privilege, of preaching tonight on this beautiful Sunday night to such a congregation. But should the Lord say to me, “Adrian, I want you to resign this church, and I want you to go to the heart of Africa,” should He say that to me tonight, immediately I would have to resign this church and go. No matter what the Lord calls me to do, His desire must be my command.

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

—ISAAC WATTS

Wilbur Chapman was a great evangelist, but he wanted to know more about God. Wilbur Chapman found William Booth, who was the founder of The Salvation Army. Wilbur Chapman asked William Booth this question: “What is the secret of the hand of God upon your life? What is the secret of the spiritual success that rests upon you?” William Booth, that grizzled old warrior, thought for a while. With one hand he brushed the white locks away from his furrowed brow, and this is what he said: “What is the secret of my life? I will tell you the secret. God has had all of me there was to have.

There have been men of greater opportunity, but from the day I caught a vision of what Jesus Christ could do, I gave all to Him.”

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that stabs my heart. And as I stand here before you tonight, I must ask myself this question: Have I given Jesus Christ all? There are times when my heart may get cold and I don't even realize it. There are times when I may become a “professional” pastor and I'm going through the motions. And I have to get into my prayer closet and get on my knees and my face before the Lord. And I take those things that mean so much to me—I take my family, and I give them one at a time to Jesus Christ; I take my material possessions—I name them; I give them one at a time to Jesus Christ. I take my reputation. I take my ambitions. I take my friendships. I take them all and give them to Jesus Christ. And I know when I mean business, because the Bible says, “When your eye is single, your body is full of light.” (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34) And I cannot tell you what a glorious freedom, what a glorious liberty there is when you can say, “Lord, here are these things. Lord, I thank you for them. And, Lord, you know I don't want to part with them; but, dear Lord, they're yours and I'm under your command. I've given you all.”

I want to ask you that question, because I ask myself that question, and not lightly: Have you said, as William Booth said, “Jesus Christ has all there is of me?” I want to ask you businessmen and you deacons and you people here tonight, does Jesus Christ have all of your finances? Does He? I'll tell you, when we get ready to build that new building, you know what's going to happen? He's going to challenge some of you. And you sing, “All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give,” and He reaches into that savings account; He reaches into that retirement account; He reaches into that vacation home; He reaches into that beautiful diamond; He reaches into that boat, that motor home, and says, “I want it”: what are you going to do? What are you going to do?

Oh, you say, “Now, Brother Rogers, wait a minute. I'll move my membership next week.” Well, you'd better do it in a hurry—better do it in a hurry. I want to tell you something, friend. It's one thing to say, “Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold,” and then hold it with all our might. All is what He asks—all there is. I'm not saying that He's going to ask that of you, but you must be willing for Him to ask it. You must be willing for Him to ask it. I mean, is there anything in my life that I say, “Now, Lord, you can't touch that; that belongs to me; I worked for that; I'm saving that; that's my security”? My friend, your security is in Jesus Christ or you don't have any.

Now, there's a cost. It costs to serve Jesus. And what He is saying is, “I must come before personal relationships. I must come before personal reputation. I must come before personal realization. You must take up your cross. Follow me. Come and die.”

## **II. There Is a Cost to Consider**

But not only is there a death to die; there is a cost to consider. Look, if you will, in verse 28: *“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”* A death to die. A cost to consider. Now, here the Lord Jesus is teaching that our lives are to be like a strong tower, a tower of witness, a tower of warning, a tower of warfare. That’s what my life is to be: a strong and a mighty tower. God is to be the architect. The Bible is the blueprint. God has a plan for my life.

### **A. It Is to Be Seriously Considered and Sacrificially Constructed**

But I want you to learn several things about the construction of this tower. It is to be seriously considered. We are to sit down first and count the cost. There is a cost. A man asked a missionary, “Do you like this work?” This is what the missionary said: “No, my wife and I do not like dirt. We have reasonably refined sensibilities. We do not like crawling into vile huts through goat refuse. We do not like associating with ignorant, filthy, brutish people. But is a man to do nothing for Christ’s sake which he does not like? God pity such a one! Liking or disliking has nothing to do with it. We have orders to go and love constrains us.”

You see, it’s not always easy. It’s not always glorious. It’s not always fun. Many communists are out-sacrificing those of us who call ourselves Christian. One communist reproached the cause of Christ as he spoke to a Christian, and this is what he said to that Christian: “How can you believe in the supreme value of this gospel if you do not practice it, if you do not spread it, if you sacrifice neither time nor money for it? Believe me, it is we who will win, for we believe in our communistic message, and we are ready to sacrifice everything, even our life, in order that social justice shall triumph. But you people are afraid to soil your hands.” And, friend, that would be true of many Sunday morning pew setters who want a streamlined, air-conditioned, upholstered faith that does not cost anything.

Now you’d better seriously consider. You’d better sit down first and count the cost. Sainly Samuel Rutherford said, “It is folly to think to steal into heaven with a whole skin.” You know, today we have a kind of a cult of happiness. There are people getting on television, radio, and telling you there’s health, wealth, and success in five easy lessons if you’ll just come to Jesus.

### **B. It Is to Be Steadfastly Completed**

This tower is to be seriously considered—it is to be sacrificially constructed: there’s a

cost. And it is to be steadfastly completed. You see, the heartbreak of Christianity is so many half-finished towers. Look up here. You see this crowd tonight? Look around. Did you know that we're having difficulty getting Sunday School teachers? Did you know that? Did you know that we're having difficulty getting nursery workers? Did you know that we're having difficulty getting people to fulfill the basic functions of this church? And many of you who are listening to me were once mighty Sunday School teachers. God gave you a call, and God gave you a gift, but now you're sequestered away in some other church where you're having such rich fellowship. Do you know what you are? You're a quitter. You're a shirker. You're a slacker. You are a half-built tower. And the hordes of hell are mocking you.

Some of you used to be deacons. I'm talking about deacons who were on fire for God, who had a call from God, who were kneeled here in this auditorium or some other auditorium, and a row of men came by and laid their hands on your head and prayed over you and separated you unto the ministry of a deacon. Then you rotated off and you said, "Well, you know, it's kind of rough being a deacon down at Bellevue now. It used to be they'd just meet and vote. Now they want us to counsel. Now they want us out on the parking lot. Now they want us in Bellevue's in-reach to visit every home, and so forth. If you don't mind, I pray thee, have me excused." And you used to be a deacon, but you don't *deac*. And you couldn't even be re-elected a deacon, because you haven't got the qualifications. You know what you are? You're a half-finished tower. You're a disgrace to God and man.

There are some of you who used to tithe. You believed in tithing. You read the Word of God. You knew the Bible said, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I'll not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing. There shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3:10) But then financial difficulty came along. You had some bills that you were behind on, and there were some things that you wanted to buy, and things got tough. And rather than trusting God, you quit—and you haven't started back again. You're a half-finished tower, and the hordes of hell are mocking you and saying, "He began to build and wasn't able to finish."

Some of you used to be soul winners. There was a time when you would weep over souls, when you had a broken heart, when you said, "Lord God, use me! Use me! God, lay some soul upon my heart and win that soul through me." Now you have no passion for souls. It's been months—and for some of you, years—since you even tried to bring a soul to Jesus Christ. You started, but you looked back.

Now I want you to notice what's going to happen, dear friend. The hordes of hell are going to mock you. They're going to laugh at you. They're going to say, "This man

began to build, and he was not able to finish”: “and they began to mock him”—verse 29.

### **III. There Is a Foe to Face**

I want to tell you, there’s a death to die. I want to tell you, there is a cost to consider. And I want to tell you something else: There is a foe to face. Look, if you will, in verse 31: *“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.”*

A disciple is a warrior. There’s no way that you can serve the Lord Jesus without a battle. I’d like to. It seems like I’ve been in a fight all my ministry over something. I don’t even try to get anyone upset. But it’s amazing. You would think in the Baptist ministry if you just took a word for Christ in the Bible, everybody would praise you. But, friend, they’ll break your neck, some of them. They really will. There is a battle. It is an uphill climb. And it is a fight all the way. I don’t say much about it. I don’t weep over it. I don’t sit around and lick my wounds. I’m not feeling sorry for myself. But I want to tell you, I’ve learned this one thing: that when Jesus Christ calls us, He calls us to fight the good fight of faith. I’m not talking about the bad fight. I’m talking about the good fight. And what’s the Lord looking for?

#### **A. Jesus Is Looking for Warriors Who Are Not Cowards**

First of all, He’s looking for warriors who are not cowards. Notice what the odds are. Look at it. *“What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?”* How do you like those odds? Two to one. That ought not to bother us. *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31) We ought to be like that man who sat out on the battlefield, that sergeant: “Men, we’re surrounded by the enemy. Don’t let a one of them escape.”

#### **B. Jesus Is Looking for Warriors Who Are Not Compromisers**

What we need are warriors who are not cowards. And what we need is warriors who are not compromisers—because, you see, if you become a coward, then soon you’re going to become a compromiser. Now, what is a compromiser? A compromiser is a man, rather than being a soldier, he becomes an ambassador. Look at it again—verse 32: *“Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.”*

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I submit to you that one of the weaknesses of twentieth-century Christianity is this: that we have become ambassadors rather than warriors.

We're trying to strike up an agreement with the devil and peaceably co-exist with him. But there can be no peaceable co-existence. A. W. Tozer, who was a prophet—and, by the way, we have some of his books in our bookstore. And, by the way, if you don't visit Bellevue's bookstore, you're missing a tremendous blessing. One of the greatest ministries of our church is Bellevue's bookstore. And you go in there sometime and buy some of the books of A. W. Tozer and read those books. Here's one thing that Tozer said. Tozer said, "We who preach the gospel must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish goodwill between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, to the press, or to the world of sports or modern education. We are not diplomats, but prophets and warriors. Our message is not a compromise, but an ultimatum." Well, that's well said, isn't it?

### **C. Jesus Is Looking for Warriors Who Are Not Conquered**

You see, if we are warriors, first of all, who are cowards, then we're going to be warriors who are compromisers. But we're to be warriors who are not cowards, not compromisers, and are not conquered. Look in verse 33 of this chapter. "*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*" Douglas MacArthur said, "In war, there's no substitute for victory." Now, Christ has already won the victory if we follow Him, and we shall not, we cannot, we will not be defeated.

## **IV. There Is a Savior to Share**

Now, the fourth and final thing: Not only is there a death to die; not only is there a cost to consider; not only is there a foe to face; but there's a Savior to share, if we would be His disciple. Now, notice as He continues to talk here, beginning in verse 33 of this same chapter: "*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*"

Now, salt speaks of witness. Jesus said in Matthew 5:13, "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" (Matthew 5:13) And, hurriedly, let me just tell you what He meant by that: what salt does.

### **A. Salt Seasons**

First of all, salt seasons. Job 6:6 says, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt—for example, an egg white?" (Job 6:6) A little boy said, "Salt is what tastes bad when you don't have it." Now, Jesus said, "You're the salt of the earth." And what

He means by that is that we ought to flavor the situation that we're in. There ought to be a tang, a zest, of flavor about us. You see, so many of us, because we missed these first three requirements, have a testimony that is flat and dull and insipid and tasteless. There's no zip to us. There's no salt to us. There's no flavor to us. There's no zest to us. There's nothing about us that would make somebody else want to be like us. Salt flavors.

## **B. Salt Cleanses**

I'll tell you what else salt does: Salt cleanses. In the book of Ezekiel 16:4, you can find where salt was used as an antiseptic to bathe newborn babies with. And salt has a cleansing, purifying antiseptic nature to it. If the people in this building, much less the members of our church, were to witness, testify, protest, vote, and express themselves as they ought to express themselves, some of the filth in Memphis, Tennessee would be cleaned up—do you know that? Some of you businessmen, do you know what the pornographer wants? Do you know what the topless entrepreneur wants? He wants some preacher, some zealot, to go out there and make a cause against him and give him some free advertisement in the newspaper. But when you businessmen say, and you medical men say, and you lawyers say, and you judges say, and you politicians say, and you housewives say, and you mothers say, “We are not going to have it”—I'm not talking about going off in a tirade, but I'm talking about saying something sensibly and strongly and firmly, and keeping on saying it—public opinion is stronger than the laws on the books.

Now you don't believe that, but it is true. What we need is the league of the indignant. And that place where you buy your groceries, if they're selling filth, you ought to take some of that to that grocer and say, “Look at this! Look at this! What do you mean having this in the grocery store where I buy my groceries?” Well, he might think you're a fanatic, a fool. But you let about six or seven, or ten, or twelve, or fifteen, or thirty, or forty, or fifty say that to him, and I'll guarantee you he'll be talking to his wife about it that night at supper. And let it continue to happen, and before long something's going to happen in our city. Salt cleanses.

## **C. Salt Irritates**

And I want to say something else. The ungodly crowd doesn't like the salt, because salt irritates. If you've ever rubbed salt into a wound, you know what I'm talking about. Salt irritates. Mark 9:49: *“For every one shall be salted with fire.”* (Mark 9:49) That means that salt burns. When you take God's truth and you rub it into this old diseased world, it's going to burn. And, you know, there are some people say, “You know, Adrian, you sound like a fanatic tonight. You're going to irritate people.” Well, you can't rub salt

in a wound without irritating it. But I want to say, no offence, no effect. Salt irritates.

#### **D. Salt Penetrates**

I'll tell you something else that salt does: Salt penetrates. Jesus said, "*Ye are the salt of the earth*"—not the salt of the church; the salt of the earth. It's time we got the salt out of this glorified saltshaker with the chandelier. You don't put the salt in one barrel and the fish in another. Salt is to penetrate. You rub it on something and it goes in. Wasn't it Edmund Burke who said, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing?" Jesus said, "If the salt hath lost its savor, it is good for nothing but to be trodden under feet of men." (Matthew 5:13) And that's what's going to happen to the church. They're going to ride us down. They're going to tread us down. They're going to make laws. They're going to maneuver us. And, before long, we are going to be nothing but a dirty road for them to trample on if we do not stand up and speak up for the Lord Jesus Christ and the things of God. Salt penetrates.

#### **E. Salt Heals**

And I want to say that salt heals. Praise the Lord! In 2 Kings 2, Elisha cast a cruse of salt into the waters that were bitter waters and barren waters and poisoned waters, and they were healed. (1 Kings 2:19–22) I've seen that salt heal. I've seen it heal broken homes and broken hearts and broken hopes. I know that it heals.

Now we are to share the Savior. We are to be His salt. That's what it costs. That is the demand of discipleship.

### **Conclusion**

There is a death to die. There is a cost to consider. There's a foe to face. There's a Savior to share. It costs to serve Jesus. You say, "Brother Rogers, that sounds so terrible." Well, let me just turn it around: "It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day, it pays every step of the way." And I am so gloriously happy that Jesus has saved me and called me into His service. And I want to continue by God's grace to pay the price.

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Before we observe this Lord's Supper, I want to ask you this question now. There's a big crowd here tonight. Jesus had a big crowd, multitudes, and He turned to them and gave them the demands of discipleship. And in a moment you're going to take into your hands and ingest into your body this broken bread, this fruit of the vine. It represents the fact that you are His disciple, that you are one with Him, that He is in you, and that you are in Him. Ask yourself this question: Are you ready to die to self? I said give Him all your business, your finances, your children, your future, your ambitions. Are you? Are you? I say, are you? Are you willing to consider the cost, those of you who've been half-built towers,

and to say that “I am tired of the devil mocking me, and I want my life to be finished in a way that will bring glory and praise to Jesus”? Those of you who’ve been intimidated by the devil, are you willing now to sit down, and count the cost, and say, “Though the odds be two to one, if God be for me, who can be against me; I’m not going to negotiate with the devil over anything”? Are you willing to say, “God, I’ll be the salt you want me to be in that neighborhood, in that business, in that school; wherever it is, Lord, I’ll be your salt; I’m tired of being a good for nothing Christian”?

Father, in Jesus’ name, bless us, Lord, now as we prepare for this memorial supper. Amen.

# Jesus, Friend of Sinners

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 25, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Sinful Nature of Man

II. The Saving Nature of God

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, there are some passages of Scripture that are a blessing. There are some that are classic. We're going to deal with one of those passages this morning.

I would like for you to find in your Bibles, Luke chapter 15. And if you have been on the trail for a while, you'll recognize this as a story that Jesus told about how much God loves you. Now perhaps you think, "You know, Pastor, I have sinned so much. I have gone so far. I have refused so long that God has written me off. There is no hope for me." Well, I want to take that idea out of your head today. And we're going to look here in Luke chapter 15, and I want us to get the setting. Verses 1 and 2: "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." Now notice he said publicans and sinners. In this day it was almost like one word. The publicans were the tax collectors. They were hated and they were crooks, most of them. So then, they're coming now to hear the Lord Jesus Christ. Now look, if you will, in verse 2: "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." What they were doing was criticizing the Lord Jesus Christ for spending time with publicans and sinners.

Now these Pharisees, in whom the milk of human kindness had curdled, began to criticize. I want to say to you, it doesn't take a lot of size to criticize, and every church sometimes has people who are critics. One pastor said, "Brother Jones, would you stand and lead us in a word of criticism?" And they're criticizing, but they're criticizing the very Son of God. Now these, who were these that were doing this criticism? These were the elite. These were the blessing the, I mean, the, the high society of religion in that day. We might call them the upper crust. Somebody said, "The upper crust are a lot of rich people held together by dough." But, you see, these, these were held together by religion, but they didn't have Jesus. Now they were the up and out. And then the

publicans and the sinners were the down and out. But what the Lord Jesus Christ is going to teach in this passage is that He loves all. And I want to stand here today and tell you, precious friend on the back row, down here at the front, wherever you may be, God loves you. And the title of the message is this: “Jesus, the Friend of Sinners.” “Jesus, the Friend of Sinners.” I rejoice that He is a friend to sinners, don’t you? I’m telling you where would I be if Jesus Christ were not a friend of sinners? Thank God that He was. Thank God that He is.

Now when they criticized the Lord Jesus, Jesus gave a parable. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. So Jesus told these stories, and the Bible says here He gave a parable. Now some people think in this 15th chapter there are three parables, but, really, it’s a parable with three parts to it. And what He does, He talks here in this parable about a lost sheep. Then He talks about some lost silver. Then He talks about a lost son. And He tells their needs, and He tells why He loves them.

## **I. The Sinful Nature of Man**

So let’s look, first of all, at what I want to call the sinful nature of man. This is your nature, my nature, our nature; the sinful nature of man.

### **A. The Weakness of Man Without God**

For example, we are weak like a sheep. Look, if you will, in 15:4 now: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”

#### **1. A Sheep Is Dumb**

Now a sheep is one of the weakest animals around. Let me tell you about a sheep. First of all, a sheep is dumb. I mean, they’re stupid. You know, if, if you go to the circus, you might see a trained elephant, a trained lion, a tiger, a horse, a dog. You’ve never seen a trained sheep. A sheep is dumb. Now sometimes we think that, because we’re sheep, we’re being praised. No. We are sheep, but a sheep is dumb. And because he’s dumb, he can’t find his way home. He’ll browse here, nibble there, and eat here, and he gets further and further away, and he can’t find his way home. A dog can find his way home. A horse finds his way home. A cow can find her way home. But a sheep, because it’s dumb, this sheep just strays from God and, therefore, they need a shepherd. Now Romans chapter 3, verse 11, speaks of how dumb sheep are. It says, “There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God.”

If you’re here without the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to tell you something. You do not understand the things of God. Now you say, “Wait a minute, pastor. I made good grades in school. I run a business. I’m a lawyer, I’m a doctor, I’m an entrepreneur, I’m this, I’m

that.” Friend, without Jesus—can I say this nicely?—you’re dumb, you’re dumb. I mean, you’re like a sheep. A sheep is dumb.

## **2. A Sheep Is Defenseless**

And not only is a sheep dumb, but, friend, a sheep is defenseless. Now you think about it. A horse can run, the tiger can claw, the wolf can bite, the cat can scratch. What can a sheep do? Now you say, “Well, wait a minute. I’m strong. I’ve got finances.” No, listen. We’re talking on a spiritual plane. It’s an earthly story with a spiritual meaning. What Jesus says is, “The devil’s coyotes is after you. The devil’s vultures are after you. The devil’s mountain lions are after you.” And you’ll not escape. Like a sheep, we’re dumb. Like a sheep, we’re dependent and defenseless.

Keller in his book, “A Shepherd Looks at the 23rd Psalm,” talks about a sheep being so dependent. You know, that’s the reason why Jesus said when He saw the multitudes, “...He was moved with compassion, for he saw them as sheep having no shepherd.”

They say that a sheep, Keller says in this book, and he was a sheepherder, he said that sometimes a sheep will feed on the green, succulent grass. And then the sheep will lie down and stretch out to digest that food. But if there’s a crevice there or a hollow place, sometimes the center of gravity will shift and he’ll find himself on his back. Now a sheep does not have enough agility to get up and he can’t, he just paws the air. And when he does that, the gases begin to fill up in his stomach. He begins to bloat, and the circulation is cut off to his legs. And after a while, he will be dead. He is so dependent upon the shepherd. So am I. So are you.

Now the good shepherd gets back to the fold at night and he counts his sheep. He has 100 sheep. Ninety and nine are there, but one is missing. And he goes out to the mountainside to find that missing sheep who is so dependent upon the shepherd to put him back on his feet. Now, friend, Jesus was asked, “Why do you keep company with sinners?” He said, “They’re weak like a sheep.”

## **B. The Worthlessness of Man Without God**

And then He gives another parable, if you will. Look, if you will, now in Luke 15, verse 8: “Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece that I had lost.”

Now Jesus talks about a lost sheep. Now He’s talking about lost silver. Here’s a woman who lost a valuable coin, and she needs that coin. She wants that coin, and so, she is searching for that coin, because not only is man weak like a sheep; he is

worthless like a lost coin.

You see, when a coin is minted, it is meant to be spent or else treasured, but it is not to be lost. Now God made you to serve Him, and until you serve Him, not only are you weak like a sheep; you are worthless like a lost coin. You say, “Well, now wait a minute. I’m not worthless.” Without Jesus you are. The Bible teaches this very clearly and plainly that we have all gone out of the way; together we’ve become unprofitable. You see, if a coin is lost, it is not profitable.

When I was swimming down in West Palm Beach, Florida in the ocean, one day I looked up and my wedding ring was gone. It had slipped off while I was swimming. It went to the bottom of the ocean. Now there are some shells down there and a ring down there. My ring, on the bottom of the ocean, is worth no more than those shells, if it’s on the bottom of the ocean. You see, a treasure that is lost is no treasure. A coin that is lost is unprofitable.

Now you may think that you’re very profitable, but I’m talking about the kingdom of heaven. You see, our Lord is talking about the, the worthlessness of a man without God. God created you to know Him, love Him, and serve Him.

### **1. The Coin Was Lost in Darkness**

Now how did this coin get lost? Well, it was lost, first of all, in the darkness. Look, if you will, in verse 8: “Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle...” You see, this coin, like every unsaved person, is in darkness and great darkness, because the God of this world had blinded their minds. And so, like a lost coin, you’re in darkness.

### **2. The Coin Was Lost in Dirtiness**

And then this same verse of Scripture says, that she not only lights a candle, but she sweeps the house. Look in verse 8. She sweeps the house. Not only was it lost in darkness; it was lost in dirt. It’s down there somehow in the dirt. And so she’s sweeping the house, disturbing the dirt, hoping to find the coin. But now, listen.

### **3. The Coin Was Lost in Disgrace**

Not only was it lost in darkness and lost in the dirt; it was lost in disgrace. Now Jesus here speaks of ten pieces of silver. That’s very interesting. He doesn’t say, “Which of you, having a piece of silver, loses it.” He talks of ten pieces of silver, and one is lost. Ten is the complete number. Like seven is the perfect number, but ten is the complete number. Five fingers, five fingers—ten. And so, in Bible symbolism, ten means completeness.

Now let me tell you why I said it was lost in disgrace. Back in this day, a husband would give to his wife ten pieces of silver. There would be a hole in the center with a

ribbon that would go through them. The husband would engrave his name on it. And if you've seen the pictures of Middle Eastern women with these coins going across their face. I think you have. Very similar to our wedding ring today, our engagement ring. And she would wear these. That spoke of the loyalty of her husband to her and she to him. Now if she were unfaithful, if she became an adulteress, they would take a coin right out of the center, and there would be a hideous gap there. She would be disgraced. You can understand now why she was frantically seeking this coin. You see, God loves you and He wants you to be His, but the devil wants to make you a disgrace to God.

And so, man is so weak like a lost sheep: dumb, dependent, defenseless. Man is so worthless like a lost coin: lost in the dark, lost in the dirt, lost in disgrace. Remember, they're asking Jesus, "Why do you keep company with these people?" And Jesus said, "That's why I do it."

### **C. The Wretchedness of Man Without God**

Now, the third thing that Jesus told was a story of a lost son. The story, remember now, lost sheep, lost silver, and now the story of a lost son. Now look, if you will, in Luke 15, verses 11 through 12: "And he said, a certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living." Both sons got the same amount. And, when this young man was saying to his father, "Father, I want my inheritance and I want it now." Now the inheritance was normally given when the father died, but this man says, "I want it, and I want it now." It was a way of saying to his father, "I wish you were dead. I don't need you. I don't want your love. I don't want your fellowship. I don't want your authority over me. I just want what you have. I don't want you." Now, friend, there are many people just like that today. They don't want God, but they want what God has. They walk on God's green earth. They breathe God's fresh air. They live on the abundance that God has given: the rain and the sunshine, but they don't want God. They don't want God. And so, Jesus tells the story of this, this boy, and Jesus is going to say, "He is a wretched boy because he is away from home."

Now look, if you will, in verse 13: "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." Now I don't know where he went. If he lived in Memphis, maybe he went to New Orleans. Maybe he went to Las Vegas. Maybe he went to Miami. Maybe he went to Tunica. I don't know where he went, but he went to a far country. And there he wasted what his father had given him, living high, wide, and handsome, women, liquor, and song, and soon it was gone because he was spending money like it was water in his hands. Now what happened?

## **1. There Was Depression**

Well, first of all, there was depression. Now the Bible says a mighty famine came in that land. Look in verses 14 through 19: “And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself—that is, when he was in his right mind—he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.”

Now what is the fruit of this kind of sin? First of all, there's depression. There arose a famine in that land. That's just another word for saying depression. Now you say, “Well, I'm not in depression. I've got a lot in the bank.” I want to tell you something: one of two things. Soon it will leave you, or you will leave it. There arose a depression. Don't boast about what you have, about your strength, about your friends, about your intellect. All of these things are here, but Jesus is saying there's going to be a depression.

## **2. There Was Degradation**

And not only was there depression, but there was degradation. This boy, having lost it all, went and joined himself to a citizen of that country—that is, a stranger somewhere else—and he sent him out to feed the pigs, to feed the swine. Now remember, Jesus is giving this parable to the Pharisees, the high muckety-mucks of the Jewish religion, and it's a Jewish audience. This was a Jewish boy. A self-respecting Jew would not touch a pig with a ten-foot pole. And there he is slopping the hogs and wanting some of the swill that the hogs did eat— “...would fain to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.”

## **3. There Was Dissatisfaction**

What is the story? Look at it. It is a story, ladies and gentlemen, of depression. And then it's a story of degradation. And then it's a story of dissatisfaction. He's hungry. He doesn't have anything to satisfy his deepest longings.

Now remember, Jesus is talking in a spiritual sense right now, and what He is saying is this: that without the Father, there is a gnawing hunger in every man's breast. Now you may be wearing a mask today. You may be laughing and going on your way, but I'll tell you this much: down in your heart, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a hunger for God. Friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for by sin undermine; I know where 'tis found, only true pleasures in Jesus abound. Friend, if you

don't know the Lord Jesus, I know that I know there is a God-shaped vacuum in your heart. And so what our Lord is talking about here is the, is the weakness of man without God, like a sheep. The worthlessness of man, like a lost coin. The wretchedness of man away from God. He said, "You want to know why I keep company with them? That's the reason."

## **II. The Saving Nature of God**

But now, let's turn it over and think not only of the sinful nature of man, but let's think of the saving nature of God. In this parable, there were three who would, go out and seek that which was lost. There was the, the shepherd, there was the woman, and there was the father. Now you're going to learn something about the nature of God as you look at these people. For example, the shepherd represents the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman represents the Holy Spirit. And the father represents the loving Father in heaven.

Now, first of all, the shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ. The sheep is lost. The shepherd is Jesus. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Now want, let me tell you what the nature of Jesus is. You want to know what the nature of Jesus is? It is to seek the lost. Why did Jesus come to this earth? He didn't come primarily as a teacher. He didn't come as a healer. He came as a Savior—do you know that? As a Savior. Luke 19:10: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." The apostle Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." That is the nature of the Lord Jesus. And let me just put this in parenthetically. If Jesus is in your heart, you are going to want to go out after the lost. Now if you don't care about lost people, I think you'd better check up on that thing you call salvation, because the nature of Jesus is to rescue, to rescue the perishing. That is His nature. He is the seeking Savior. And so the Lord, when He told this story, spoke of a shepherd that represented Him.

Then He spoke of a woman. That represents the Holy Spirit of God. And not only do we see, in the shepherd, the rescuing nature of God, but in the woman we see the revealing nature of God. What this woman did was to light a candle because this coin was lost in the darkness. That's what God the Holy Spirit wants to do in your heart this morning, to light a candle, to see the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ because, friend, without the Holy Spirit, you'll never understand. That's the reason I got on my knees this morning before I came out here, as I do every Sunday, and said, "O God Almighty, please anoint me to preach," because it's the Spirit that gives light—not a sermon, not an outline—the Holy Spirit of God. And God wants to light the candle of hope in your heart. So she lights a candle. And then she begins to sweep. The candle

speaks of illumination. The broom speaks of disturbance. This is conviction. The Lord, she begins to sweep and to stir up all of that filth and that dirt.

Now if God is working on you this morning, you're going to see that candle and you're going to feel that broom. Now if you don't have that, then I suggest that you wait before God till He sends it to you.

You see, this coin was lost in darkness and lost in dirtiness and lost in disgrace. But, you see, there's not only the saving nature of God the Son, the rescuing nature, not only is there the revealing nature of God the Spirit, but there is the receiving nature—oh listen to me, precious friend—of God the Father, the receiving nature of God the Father.

Now this boy is down in the pigpen, and what does he say? He came to himself and said, "Why, the servants in my father's house, the servants have bread enough and to spare. They don't eat everything on their plate. And here I am perishing with hunger. I will arise and go to my father—now listen to this—and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and I'm no more, no more worthy to be called thy son." But the Bible says, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." And he said, "Father, I'm not worthy to be your son. Would you just make me a servant? Let me bunk out with the other slaves." And the father fell on his neck and kissed him and said, "Bring a ring and put it on his hand." That's a sign of sonship. "Bring a robe and put it on him, and put shoes on his feet." The slaves didn't wear shoes. Here this father is receiving this boy. It's one of the most moving pictures in all of the Bible. This father has been longing for his son. He goes to the mailbox. No mail. He asks everybody, "Have you seen my boy? Have you seen John?" Nobody's seen him. The father is sitting up there on the front porch, looking down with his keen eye down the long road that leads to the house, and he sees a figure coming. And first he is of no consequence to the old man. But then there's something about the way the boy swings his arms. There's something about his gait, the way he walks. Something about the way he swings his head. And the old man says, "That's John! That is John!" And he leaps over the balcony, the banister, and he begins to run down that road to meet that boy. What a picture of God the Father.

You know, in the Bible, God moves with deliberate majesty. In every other place when you read about God the Father, He is never late, He's never in a hurry, and we're told to wait on God. But here's a picture of God in a hurry. I see that old man as he gathers up his robes and runs and runs to meet that boy coming home.

## Conclusion

I'm telling you, this morning I'm going to give an invitation. And if you'll step out and

start down one of these aisles, God will run up the other side to receive you. He loves you. Friend, Jesus said, "You want me to tell you why I keep company with sinners? They're weak like a sheep. They're worthless like a lost coin. They're wretched like a lost son. That's the nature of sinful man. But let me tell you the nature of Almighty God. There's the rescuing nature of God the Son. There is the revealing nature of God the Spirit. There is the receiving nature of God the loving Father.

I don't believe I've ever preached on this passage, but what I tell the following story. I've told you before many, many years ago. I don't know where the story first originated. But a preacher, an old preacher was riding on a train. And he looked across the aisle and he, he saw a young boy. And the preacher, knowing the ways of man and having counseled many people, he could see the boy was in trouble. He could see he was fidgety and nervous, so he went over and sat by him and said, "Son, I'm a minister of the gospel, and I don't want to pry, but do you have a problem? May, perhaps I can help you." The boy said, "Yes, sir, I do have a problem." He said, "Let me tell you. Many years ago, I had a fight with my parents. My parents and good and decent people. I was wicked and ungrateful, and I left home and slammed the door behind me and looked back and said, 'I will never come back to this house again.'" He said, "I've lived apart from my loving parents." And he said, "I have received word now that my daddy is sick. And I thought how hurtful and hateful and sinful I've been. Would I let my daddy die without my apology to him, without asking his forgiveness?" And so he said, "I'm on this train. These tracks run close to my house, and we're almost there. There's a curve in the track, and out by the track, behind my parents' house is a tree, a large tree. And I told them I would be on this train. And I told them if they would let me come home, to tie a handkerchief on that tree. But if I didn't see the handkerchief, I would know I was not worthy to come home and I would just keep riding." And he said, "Now we're very close." The preacher said, "Son, you pray and I'll look." And the old preacher in his heart said, "O God, let there be a handkerchief on that tree." The train came around the curve. He said, "Son, lift up your head and look." And that old couple had gone out there. They'd gotten every towel, every bed sheet, every quilt, everything that they could find that was white, and that tree looked like a mountain of snow. Come home. Come home.

I want to tell you, God loves you! The good shepherd is seeking you. The Holy Spirit is shining light on you. And God the Father has His arms open wide.

I want you to bow your head in prayer. If you've been away from God, you need the Lord, I want you to let God speak to your heart. In a way, I want you to forget what I've said and I want you to listen to what God is saying, because God is telling you to come home. While heads are bowed, I'm going to ask Joyce if she'll sing for a moment.

I wandered far away from God,  
Now I'm coming home.  
The paths of sin too long I've trod,  
Lord, I'm coming home.  
Coming home, Coming home,  
Nevermore to roam  
Open wide your arms of love,  
Lord, I'm coming home!

Now keep your heads bowed, your eyes closed for just a moment. My dear friend, I want to lead you in a prayer. And if you realize how much God loves you and will receive you, I want you to pray this prayer after me. Dear God, thank You for the Holy Spirit who reveals my sin, disturbs my heart, puts me under conviction. Thank You for the dear Savior who died and gave His life for the sheep and shed His blood that I might be saved. Thank You, God, that You love me and You will not turn me away, for You've said in Your Word, "Whosoever will may come." Now pray this, friend, if you can pray it and mean it: Dear God, I open my heart. I receive You. I come to You now. I'm coming home. Save me, Lord Jesus. In Your holy name I pray, amen.

Now look up here. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. And if you've never given your heart to Jesus Christ and you prayed that prayer with me as best you knew how, maybe you didn't even understand it all, but you're saying, "I need God," when we stand and sing, I want you to leave your seat and come forward down any of these aisles. There'll be a man of God, a minister, to welcome you. If you're in the balcony, there'll be a minister under that banner that says Redeemer on that side. Standing by this other one that says Messiah will be somebody to welcome you. And if you say today, "O God, I'm coming home," then just out and come. You say, "Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?" Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus." "What will happen?" Well, we'll rejoice. You know, in this parable, the Bible, each of these said, "Rejoice with me. I've found my sheep. Rejoice, I've found a coin. Rejoice, we're going to have a party." Friend, I'll tell you, when you come to Jesus this morning, there'll be a party in heaven, and it, it'll be over you. There'll be a holy commotion in heaven over you because you've come to Jesus.

Now some of you have already been saved, but there's a secondary sense in which this applies to you. You've wandered far away. You need to renew your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to come and get on your knees here and make an old-fashioned altar of these steps, and pray and go back to your seat.

Others of you need a church home. And I'm going to ask you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here," if you know Jesus and you know that you're saved.

But most of all, I want to speak to those of you who need Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. If you prayed that prayer with me to show you mean business, I want you to come forward.

And, congregation, let's pray as they come. Stand together right now.

# Jesus, Friend of Sinners

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 25, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Sinful Nature of Man

II. The Saving Nature of God

Conclusion

## Introduction

What a great song! I told Rachel I'd never heard that before. It's a beautiful song, and it certainly has a message for us today.

I want you to take your Bibles and open to Luke chapter 15, if you will, this morning. And when you open and look at it, you will realize this is a classic passage of Scripture. Now all the Scripture is inspired and all of it is wonderful, but there's something about this chapter that stands out above all others to me; at least above many others.

Now let me ask you a question. Have you ever felt that God somehow is finished with you? That you've sinned too much? You've gone too far? It is too late? Well, if that is true, or you know somebody that's in a condition like that, you will love this 15th chapter of the Book of Luke.

Now I want us to get the setting of this chapter, and let's read the first two verses. "Then came near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." Now notice it says publicans and sinners. That was almost like one word in Bible time, because the publicans were the tax collectors, and most of them were dishonest, and, so people in that day just called them sinners. So he says publicans and sinners. What he literally means is all the other sinners. And they're coming to hear the Lord Jesus Christ. And then look in verse 2: "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. Why, this Jesus receives sinners." And, I, I'm speaking today on this subject, "Jesus, the Friend of Sinners." Jesus receives sinners. I'm so glad He does because if He didn't, I would not be here. You would not be here. Jesus receives sinners and fellowships with them and eats with them.

Now the Pharisees were criticizing. It doesn't take much size to criticize. They were criticizing Jesus. And in these Pharisees the milk of human kindness had curdled. Now they were the high muckety-mucks in the religious field. We call them the upper crust,

the upper crust. Somebody said, “The upper crust is a bunch of crumbs held together by dough” . That’s the, the upper crust. But they really weren’t held together by money; they were held together by their religion. They had a legalistic religion, and they could not understand how Jesus would keep company with sinners. Now the Pharisees and the scribes, they’re the upper class, and these publicans and sinners, they were the lowest class. But the teaching in this chapter is that whether you’re up and out or down and out, you need the Lord Jesus Christ. So they criticized Jesus. And Jesus answers them with a parable.

Look, if you will, in verse 3: “And he spake this parable unto them...” Now it doesn’t say “these parables.” It says “this parable,” because there are three stories in this parable, but it’s just a parable with three parts. And Jesus is going to answer them, their criticism, as to why He keeps company with sinners. It’s a great message for us, whether we’re saved or lost here today, and so Jesus is going to speak to these people, number one, about the sinful nature of man; number two, about the saving nature of God. Only a two-part message today, but we’ve got some sub-points. All right.

## **I. The Sinful Nature of Man**

First of all, the sinful nature of man.

### **A. The Weakness of Man Without God**

Now He points out, with a parable about the lost sheep, the weakness of man. Look, if you will, in verse 4: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.”

Now what our Lord is saying is that a man without Christ is like a sheep. That’s not a compliment. Let me tell you why.

#### **1. Sheep Are Dumb**

A sheep, number one, is dumb. Did you know that? A sheep is a dumb animal. You’ve seen a trained horse. You’ve seen lions in a cage with a trainer. You’ve seen trained dogs, trained seals. Have any of you ever gone to the circus and seen a trained sheep? No. A sheep—there’s just something about them that they’re not very intelligent. And that pictures us. You say, “Now wait a minute. I have a Ph.D. I have an education. I’m an intelligent man.” Well, remember this about a parable. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, so you have to look past the story to what Jesus Christ is saying. And what He is saying is, “Even if you have a Ph.D., even if you graduated

the highest in your class, even if you're an entrepreneur, a businessman, a professional man, a doctor, a lawyer, spiritually, without Christ, you're like a sheep. And the Bible says in Romans 3: "There is none that understandeth; no, not one." And so, the sheep don't understand. And because the sheep don't understand, they don't have enough sense to come home. Now the cows come home. A horse will come back to the barn. A dog comes home. Did you ever try to get rid of a cat? They just come home. There's this homing instinct. But not with a sheep. A sheep will nibble here and browse there and eat here, and he just keeps wandering and wandering and wandering. The first thing you know he's lost. What did Jesus say in Isaiah chapter 53? "All we like—what?—sheep have gone astray." You see, a sheep is really not highly intelligent when it comes to finding his way home.

## **2. Sheep Are Defenseless**

But not only is a sheep dumb, a sheep is defenseless. A sheep can't defend himself. Now a horse can run. A cat can scratch. A bear can claw. What can a sheep do? A sheep is not fit for fight or flight. He's not like a skunk. You know what a skunk can do?

I heard about some, a mother skunk with her baby skunks in a cave cornered by a fox. It looked desperate, and the mother said, "Children, let us spray. But the sheep can't even do what a skunk can do. And so a sheep not only is dumb, but a sheep is defenseless.

I want to tell you, sir. I want to tell you, madam. You may not think that the devil is after you, but he is. He has a plan to sabotage your life. The dynamite is in place. The fuse is lit. And you have no defense against him without Christ—none! none!

## **3. A Sheep is Dependent**

You are putty in his hands like a sheep, and the devil's coyotes, the devil's wolves, the devil's vultures, sooner or later, will find you, because a sheep is dumb, a sheep is defenseless, and a sheep is dependent. Sheep need a shepherd. Jesus said in the gospels when He saw the multitudes, "...he was moved with compassion, for they were scattered abroad as a sheep having no shepherd." The sheep is dependent upon the shepherd.

Mr. Keller has written a book about sheep. And I read that book and I found out about a sheep and his dependency. Sometimes a sheep becomes cast, C-A-S-T. That's an old English term. But what will happen sometimes, a sheep will go out and browse and graze and nibble the green, succulent grass. And then he'll lie down in the sun to digest. But if he gets in a place that's not exactly level, maybe there's a crevice there, maybe there's a hollowed out place in the earth, and he lies down, but then he suddenly loses his center of gravity and will get on his back. Now when he does this, he is not

agile enough to get up. He just lies there pawing the air because he can't right himself back up. He is cast. Now what happens is this: The gases begin to swell. He gets bloated. And the circulation to his legs is cut off, and he's going to die like that. And the vultures and the hawks and the coyotes are watching, waiting for him to die. And he cannot get up unless he is set up by the shepherd. That's the reason the shepherd, when he gets to the sheepfold, begins to count. And he starts with one and he counts right on up to one hundred because there were a hundred sheep in the parable that Jesus told—not this one, but another one. And he finds one lost sheep. And he leaves the ninety and nine in the fold and he goes out after that one lost sheep that is dependent upon him. And when he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders and brings it home. What a marvelous picture of grace that is.

And so, they're criticizing Jesus. They're saying, "Why do you keep company with these sinners?" And Jesus said, "Because they're weak like a sheep. They need a shepherd."

But then Jesus tells another parable here, another part of this parable, if you will, in chapter 15. And look, if you will, in verse 4: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, rejoice with me..." Now there's a holy commotion in heaven. There's a party in heaven when the man comes home with the sheep.

But now notice, if you will, in verse 8: "Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it—hear it again—she calleth her neighbors and her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I lost." Again, look at verse 10: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels." Sometimes I hear people say, "The angels rejoice." Well, they may, but that's not what this says. It says there's joy in the presence of the angels. The angels are around the throne. It is God Himself who rejoices. There's joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. I'll tell you, if you want to make heaven happy today, give your heart to Jesus Christ.

## **B. The Worthlessness of Man Without God**

Now man is like a lost sheep; that is, that speaks of his weakness. But he's also like a lost coin. That speaks of his worthlessness. You say, "Well, a coin, if it's lost, is still worth something." Not as long as it's lost.

I was swimming in the Atlantic Ocean one time, and I looked up and my wedding

ring was gone. Now Joyce bought me another one. She doesn't like me going around without one. She bought me another one. But somehow in the, in the ocean that ring slipped off my finger. Now, apart from a miracle, it's still there somewhere on the ocean floor and it's worth no more than a clam shell down in the water. I mean, it makes no difference. It has no value as long as it's lost. It's meant to be spent, to be circulated, or, in this case, I believe, it was meant to be treasured.

Now how was it lost? Well, it was lost in the dark because the Bible says this woman lit a candle. You see that? She lit a candle. And then not only was it lost in the dark; it was lost in the dirt. She gets a broom and begins to sweep. But not only was it lost in the dark and in the dirt; it was lost in disgrace, and that's, that's the major thing he's speaking about right here. Notice he says, "...ten pieces of silver...." He doesn't say a piece of silver. He says, "...ten pieces of silver..." Ten in the Bible is the complete number. Seven, the perfect number; but ten, the complete number. Five fingers here, five fingers there—that speaks of ten. Now, so there was a set of coins. There were ten of them. One of them is lost. What does that speak about?

Well, in Bible times, and still in the Middle Eastern countries sometimes, a woman would wear on her forehead ten pieces of silver. They call that a banda. Now what was that? Well, when she got married, her husband gave her these ten pieces of silver. There was a hole that went through the silver. He would engrave his name on it. And she would wear these ten pieces of silver there on her forehead saying that she recognizes her husband's love for her and, correspondingly, her love for her husband. But if she were unfaithful, she became an adulteress; they would take one of those pieces of silver away. There would be a hideous gap there. She would be disgraced, disgraced. And the devil wants to make your life a disgrace to Almighty God.

Now how was this coin lost? In the dark, in the dirt, and in disgrace. And so, Jesus said, "You want to know why I keep company with them? Well, they're weak like a sheep. They're worthless like a lost coin.

And then Jesus gives another parable here, at least another part of this parable, and look in verse 11: "And he said, a certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have enough bread, have bread enough

and to spare—they have more than they need—and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father—now listen to this—look in verse 20: But when he yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto the father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, no more worthy to be called thy son.” And the father breaks into the conversation right there. “But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe and put it on him. And put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and be merry. Let’s have a party,” he’s saying, “for this my son was dead, and is alive again; and he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”

Now here’s a son. There are two sons in the family. Here’s the younger. He comes to his father and he says, “Father, I know that you have an inheritance for me. I want mine now.” Do you know what he was saying? The inheritance, friend, is generally given when the father dies. What he was saying is this to his father if you analyze it: “I wish you were dead. I don’t need you. I don’t want your care over me. I don’t want your fellowship with me. I don’t want, your authority over me. I want you out of my life. Just give me not yourself, but what you have. That’s what I want.”

Now, friend, the world is full of people like that. They don’t want God, but they want what God has. They want to walk on God’s green earth. They want to breathe God’s fresh air. They want the crops, the food that God gives. They just don’t want God! “God, leave me alone. I just want your wealth. I don’t care anything about you.”

Now the Lord goes on to speak about this lost son, and I want you to notice the marks of his life that Jesus talked about.

First of all, he was lost in depression. “There arose a famine in that land, and he began to be in want.” Now he spent all his money living high, wide, and handsome, wine, women, and song. And the money, like sand, went through his hand and he was in want. He is in depression. “Well,” you say, Pastor, I’ve got a lot in the bank and I’m unsaved.” You don’t understand what we’re talking about. This is a heavenly message with an earthly story. What our Lord is saying, that a man, a woman, a boy or a girl without Jesus Christ has no true wealth. It is gone. And you say, “Well, I’ve got a lot.” Let me tell you something about what you have. Listen carefully. It’s going to leave you, or you’re going to leave it. Do you understand that? It’s going to leave you, or you’re going to leave it. But there comes a time when you live without God, there comes a depression. You’re going to stand before God at the judgment and realize how bankrupt you are without the Lord Jesus Christ.

But not only was there depression, but, friend, there was disgrace also. He's disgraced. The Bible says that he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country. That means he is enslaved, he is indentured by a man who's not even a godly man at all. "Well, how do you know that, Pastor?" He sent him into his fields to feed the swine.

Now remember Jesus has a Jewish audience here. A Jew would not touch a pig with a ten-foot pole. It's an unclean animal. And here is this boy, having left his father's house, he is down there eating, or wanting to eat, the swine swill, he's slopping the hogs and wanting to eat the slop. He has a gnawing hunger in his heart. This was as low as a boy could get, feeding pigs in that day. Now today, when somebody gets down and out, we say they've gone to the dogs. In that day, they went to the hogs.

I mean, what our Lord is saying. You have to understand what He's saying. There was depression. There was disgrace. He's in the hog pen. And I don't care what kind of house you live in, friend. Without Jesus, you're in the hog pen. Now you may not realize it. It's because you don't understand what Jesus, the Master Teacher, is teaching here. Here was a man living in depression. Here was a man living in disgrace.

And here's a man living in dissatisfaction. He's hungry. The Bible says he would like to "...fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." He has a gnawing hunger in his heart. Now you say, "Well, I have plenty to eat at home." There's a spiritual hunger in your life, and don't tell me there's not. You may come today, wear a mask and a camouflage, and sing these songs, but if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, there is an emptiness in you. There's a hunger that nothing else can fill. St. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us, O God, for thyself, and our heart is empty until we find satisfaction in You." Friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for by sin undermine. I have the secret, I know where took, 'tis found, only true pleasures in Jesus abound. And you, friend, without the Lord Jesus, you're like a lost sheep. You're like a lost silver. You're like a lost son. And Jesus said, "You want to know why I keep company with them? That's the reason I keep company with them. That's the reason I want to be a friend to sinners."

## **II. The Saving Nature of God**

But what I want us to do now is just kind of turn this over a little bit and see not only the sinful nature of man, but I want you to see also the saving nature of God. In this story, there were three who went out after that which is lost: the shepherd, the woman, and the father—three. And they represent the Holy Trinity working together to bring men, women, boys and girls to salvation.

The shepherd pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. He said in the Bible, "I am the good shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep." He suffered, bled, and died on the cross to

bring you back to God. “All we like sheep have gone astray...and the Lord hath laid on him—who? The good shepherd—the iniquity of us all.” Jesus took our sin that we might take His salvation. And so the good shepherd is pictured by the Lord Jesus Christ. Now listen to me. Jesus, today, is seeking you. He wants you. He is the one who wants you to come to Him.

Why did Jesus come? Listen. He came as a Savior. Now you say, “Well, that’s a truism.” No, there are many people who think He came as a teacher. There are many people who think He came as an example. There are many people who think that He came as a healer. All these things are incidental. The Bible says in Luke 19:10: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” That’s why He came—to seek and to save that which is lost. The apostle Paul said in the epistles, “And this is a faithful saying worthy all of all acceptation that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners...” Do you know what? The, the good shepherd is walking down these aisles this morning around, looking for His lost sheep. Friend, He’s looking for you. What, what is the nature of God? There is the shepherd, which speaks of the saving nature of God.

And then there is the woman with the broom and the candle, and, and that speaks of the revealing nature of God. Jesus, the rescuing nature, but this woman and the candle, this speaks of the revealing nature of God. Now what she does is lights a candle. I’m so grateful that one good day God lit a candle in my heart. I’m so grateful. I was in darkness, but the Lord, the Holy Spirit, whose job it is to illumine and convict, lit a candle and it shined on me because I was that lost coin. And then she took a broom and began to sweep. What does that speak of? That speaks, friend, listen to me, of the convicting power of the Spirit of God. There is the illuminating power and there is the convicting power of the very Son of God.

Has that broom ever swept your heart? Before I was saved, I knew something was desperately wrong in me. I was just a boy. But sometimes I would get on my bicycle, ride out into the woods somewhere and cry, because I knew that I was in a desperate shape. And I know that God the Holy Spirit was speaking to me. God was taking that broom and stirring up the dirt that’s in my heart. And that candle was lighted that I might see and understand the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what the Holy Spirit does. And so we see a picture, the rescuing picture of God the Son. We see the revealing picture of God the Holy Spirit.

But then, in this last parable, this parable of the lost son, we see the receiving nature of God the Father. The rescuing nature of God the Son; the revealing nature of God the Spirit, and the receiving nature of God the Son, or, or God the Father.

I want you to see the scene. Don’t tell me that Jesus is not the master storyteller.

Here's this boy. He's away from home. His father still loves him, no matter what he has done. No matter how spiteful he has been, the father still loves him. I can imagine the father saying to people who would come and go, "Have you seen my boy? Have you heard anything about John?" He'd go perhaps to the mailbox, if they had a mailbox in that day, and look and see if there's a letter from John. I wonder how my boy is doing? One day, the old man is sitting there on the front porch of the house, and he looks down the long, narrow road, and he sees someone walking. At first it seems to him just another man, but there's something about his gait, something about the way he swings his arm or tosses his head. That father looks. He says, "That's John! That is John!" He may be dressed in rags this time, he may be even emaciated by sin at this time, but the father recognizes him. And the Bible says he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. Now when you see the Bible, see God in the Bible, you see God in the Bible moving with deliberate majesty—never ahead, never late, always just very punctiliar in what He does. But this time you see God in a hurry. I can picture in my mind the old man leaping over the banister of that porch. I can see him gathering up his long robes so he can run. And he's running down the road to meet that boy who is coming home. That's the receiving nature of God.

In a moment, I'm going to give an invitation for people to come. I want to tell you some good news. When you step out of that pew and start down this aisle, God runs up the other side to meet you. God runs to meet you to receive you. There's nothing you can do so bad that He will not receive you if you will come to Him. There is the receiving nature of God. And the Bible says, "Whosoever will, may come." And don't you let the dirty devil tell you it's too late for you, that God will not receive you back. He will! He will receive you. And Jesus said, "This is why I keep company with sinners. This is why. I'm the good shepherd. The Holy Spirit works with me. And God the Father will receive those who come to Him." This is what it's all about. The sinful nature of God, the sinful nature of man and the saving nature of God.

## **Conclusion**

I preached this passage many times in my ministry. It always moves me deeply. And there's a story I think that I have told over and over again because it so perfectly fits what we're talking about. How the story began, I don't know. Who originated it, I don't know. I read it somewhere. But here's the story.

An old minister was on a train riding along, and he looked across the aisle from him and there was a young man. The young man was nervous and fidgety, and the minister, having counseled with many people, could tell. This boy somehow was in some kind of trouble. So the old preacher got up and left his seat and came and sat down by this boy,

and said, "Son, it's none of my business, but I was looking at you and it seems to me that you're troubled, that you have some kind of a problem. I'm a preacher, a minister of the gospel. Perhaps, son, I can help you." The boy said, "I don't know whether you can help me or not, but I'll tell you my story. He said, "Years ago, years ago, I had an argument with my parents. It was not their fault; it was my fault, but I was full of pride and arrogance and spitefulness, and I left home, slammed the door behind me, and told my parents, "I will never come home again." He said, "That's many years ago. But I've received word that my father is sick. I don't want my daddy to die without me asking for his forgiveness. I was so mean, so hateful. If he didn't give it, it would be what I deserve. But, oh, I want to see my parents again." And the preacher said, said, "Well, son, tell me more." He said, the young man said, "Our house is right by the railroad tracks. There's a curve in the railroad tracks, and our house is there. And I wrote to my parents and I told them I would be on this train. And I said, 'If, if I can come back home again, will you tie a handkerchief, a white handkerchief on that tree in the backyard, and I'll get off at the station. But if I don't see the handkerchief, I will just keep riding.'" And he said, "Preacher, I'm very close to that." He said, "I can hardly look." The old preacher said, "All right. You put your head down and pray, and I'll look for you." And the train came around the bend. The old preacher said, "Son, Look! Look! Look!" And that couple had taken every bed sheet, every pillowcase, every towel that was in that house and covered that tree like a mountain of snow, saying, "Come home. You're loved. Come home."

And, friend, I want to tell you if you could see God's open arms, God's love for you, you would understand why Jesus wants to keep company with you and bring you to Him.

Now I realize that many in this congregation this morning have already come home. But there's a secondary sense in which some of us have wandered far away from God, even those who are saved.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. I'm going to ask my wife Joyce to come and sing a song to you right out of her heart to yours. While heads are bowed, Miss Joyce you come and sing. And I want you to let this song speak to your heart.

I wandered far away from God,  
Now I'm coming home.  
The paths of sin too long I've trod,  
Lord, I'm coming home.  
Coming home, Coming home,  
Nevermore to roam

Open wide thy arms of love,  
Lord, I'm coming home!  
Come home, come home  
You, who are weary, come home.  
Earnestly, tenderly Jesus is calling,  
Calling, O, sinner, come home.

Now just keep your heads bowed for a moment. And would you say to the Father if you've never been saved, "O God, I know that You love me. I want to come home today." And if you have been saved and yet, somehow, strayed away from God, you've gotten out of fellowship with Him, I want you to say to God the Father, "I want to come home." Amen. Amen.

Now look up here. Today, I can tell you the good shepherd is seeking you. I can tell you that the Holy Spirit is illuminating you and stirring your heart. And I can tell you that God the Father stands with open arms to receive you today.

Now if you need to be saved, and you can be a member of the church and not be saved. You ought to be saved to be a member of the church, but the devil just as soon send you to hell from the pew as he had the gutter. And if you really want to get it settled, never truly been settled, I want you to leave your seat and come down any of these aisles. Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a man of God, a minister of this church, to receive you and welcome you. "Well, Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?" Just say, "I'm coming home," or, "I'm trusting Jesus." "What will happen?" Well, we will rejoice with you, first of all. Just as there was in heaven a holy commotion, a party, we'll rejoice the same way down here because you've come. We'll rejoice with you. And then we'll go to a quieter place and very courteously and quietly, lovingly share again the Scripture with you so you can know what it means to trust Christ, and have a prayer of commitment with you. It'll take just a few moments. It'll be the greatest thing you've ever done.

Then there are others of you, as I have said, you know Jesus, but you've strayed away, and you want to come, perhaps, to make an old-fashioned altar out of these steps and get on your knees. You don't have to say anything to the minister. But get on your knees and just say, "Lord, I'm coming home."

And then there's some of you who need a home church. And I want to ask you to come and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here." He'll tell you how you can become a member of this church. Now joining a church is no substitute for being saved. But if you're saved and you know it, you need a home church, I want you to come.

Now if you're in the balcony, there'll be someone waiting to receive you under that

banner that says Redeemer on that side, or the one that says Messiah on this side.

Now let's bow our heads one more time in prayer. Lord God, I pray, O God, Lord Jesus, go up and down these aisles seeking the lost sheep. Holy Spirit of God, shine Your light, bring Your disturbance, conviction to us. And heavenly Father, help many to come into Your arms today. In the name of Jesus. Amen and amen.

Let's stand. You step out on the first stanza.

# Lost and Found

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 31, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15**

*“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”*

LUKE 15:24

## Outline

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## Introduction

Would you be finding Luke chapter 15. And when you've found it, look up here and let me tell you a story of a man. You may have never heard of his name, but when I mention him, you're going to recognize him in a way. His name, Robert Robinson. And Robert Robinson was saved under the ministry of George Whitfield. He lived in the nineteenth century. And he felt that God had called him to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. He also was a songwriter. But he fell into immorality. He fell into sin. And just as quickly as his star had appeared on the horizon, it faded and set. And he was living in a backslidden condition. And Robert Robinson was in a stagecoach, and he was riding along with a woman he did not know, but she was reading a book. She came across some lines in that book, and they touched her heart. And she put the book in front of Robert Robinson and said, "Would you look at these lines? Would you tell me what they

mean to you? Explain to me the meaning of these lines.” And, Brother Jim, what she put in front of him were the words of this hymn, “Come, thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy praise. Streams of mercy never ceasing call for songs of loudest praise.” When Robert Robinson saw those words, he gave her back the book and tried to change the subject. But she said, “No, tell me what those words mean to you.” He said, “Madam, I wrote those words,” and he said, “I would give a thousand worlds like this one if I could feel what I felt when I wrote those words, “Come, thou fount of every blessing, tune our hearts to sing your praise.” In that same song he had written, “Prone to wander; Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here’s my heart. Oh take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above.” A man who once walked with God and got away from God.

I wonder, is that you? I wonder has there been, in any degree, a time when you were closer to God than you are at this very moment? If you were ever, ever, ever, ever closer to God than you are right now, it is my duty to inform you that you’re backslidden. Maybe you have gotten so far away from God, so burdened with guilt that you think you cannot come home. Well, today’s homecoming! Today is homecoming! And in the 15th chapter of Luke, the Lord Jesus Christ gave three parables. I think you know them. As a matter of fact, we’re going to have very little time to read all of the Scripture involved, and I’m going to collapse the entire message into a few moments if I can—and that’s hard to do when you’re preaching. It’s, it’s like trying to change a tire on a rolling truck, hm.

But I want us to get right to the heart of this matter. Jesus gave his parable in the face of the Pharisees, and the Pharisees were criticizing Jesus for eating and drinking with sinners. And in the hearts of those Pharisees there was bitterness. These Pharisees had been petrified by self-righteousness, and the milk of human kindness in their hearts had curdled. And so the Lord Jesus spoke to them. Look, if you will, in chapter 15, verse 1: “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” They criticized Jesus. I want to say right away, it doesn’t take much size to criticize. Some people think that’s their spiritual gift. A pastor said to one man, “Brother Jones, will you please stand and lead us in a word of criticism.” They were criticizing the Lord Jesus. “And he spake this parable unto them. What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” Now that’s the story He gives of the lost sheep.

And then notice in verse 8: “Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?” That’s the story of the lost silver. And then verse 11: “And he said, A certain

man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.” That’s the lost son.

And Jesus, the Master teacher and the Master storyteller, told a story of a lost sheep, lost silver, and a lost son. And Jesus said, “You want me to tell you why I keep company with sinners? I’ll tell you why. They’re like a lost sheep. They’re like a piece of lost silver. They are like a lost son.” They criticized Him for receiving sinners. But, friend, I am infinitely glad that He does, aren’t you? Because if He did not, where would we be? “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” But the problem with these Pharisees is they did not recognize their sin. They wrapped their robes of self-righteousness about them and criticized Jesus for keeping company with them.

## **I. Lost Sinners Are Like a Lost Sheep**

Very quickly, think about a lost sheep. Did you know the Bible says, “All we like sheep have gone astray?” Did you know it’s not really a compliment to be called a sheep? Let me tell you why.

### **A. A Sheep Is Dumb**

Number one: A sheep is stupid, dumb—one of the dumbest animals around. A sheep so easily gets lost. The dog can find its way home. You can’t get rid of a cat. The horse comes back to the corral. The cows come home to the barn, but not a sheep. A sheep nibbles here, browses there, just keeps on going and going. A sheep is not very smart.

I heard about a man in front of a country store playing checkers with a dog. And a man said, “That’s a smart dog you’ve got there.” He said, “Oh, I don’t know.” Said, “I beat him two out of three games.”

Now, animals can be trained. You can have a trained horse, a trained dog, a trained seal—I’ve even heard of trained fleas. Have you ever seen a trained sheep? Never will. Not one in a circus. No sheep doing tricks. You know, the Bible says, concerning those of us in the flesh, “There is none that understandeth, no not one.” Now you may be a nuclear scientist. I’m not talking about that. I’m talking about spiritual knowledge. Spiritually, people without Jesus are like a sheep prone to wander, prone to leave the God I love.

### **B. A Sheep Is Dependent**

But not only is a sheep, not only is a sheep, dumb, but a sheep is so dependent. A sheep can’t fend for himself. That’s the reason the Bible says, “Jesus was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes scattered abroad as sheep having no

shepherd.” Mr. Keller has written a book called, “The Shepherd Looks at the 23rd Psalm.” He talks about a sheep who gets in a condition that the old shepherds used to call “cast.” That is, a sheep would go out to eat and then lie down, perhaps somewhere in rocky ground, and there would be a crevice. And the center of gravity would shift and the sheep would find itself on its back with both legs in the air. And, the fat sheep could not—it’s pouring the air, frantically trying to get up, but he can’t because he doesn’t have the dexterity to get up. And he’s there upside down. And then the gases begin to build up in the intestines of that sheep, and the circulation is cut off from the legs. And the sheep may just lie there and bleat, or maybe say nothing. And unless the shepherd comes and puts him on his feet, he’ll perish.

And that’s the way we are, folks. That’s the way we are until the shepherd comes to put us on our feet. The shepherd would count all of his sheep. One is lost. One is missing. The shepherd would go out. Ninety and nine may be in the fold, but one sheep is lost. He finds that sheep and puts it back on his feet. But the sheep is also there upside down, a target for the coyotes, for the buzzards, the vultures.

### **C. A Sheep Is Defenseless**

I’ll tell you something else about a sheep. A sheep is defenseless. A horse has hoofs and can run. A goat has horns and can butt. A tiger has claws and can shred. A skunk—hmm, hmm. But what can a sheep do? A sheep is there ready to be devoured. And that’s the reason Jesus said, ‘Yes, I keep company with them because they’re like sheep without a shepherd.’”

## **II. Lost Sinners Are Like a Lost Coin**

And then He said they’re like a coin, a lost coin. Now notice that a coin is a very valuable thing. This coin was particularly valuable because Jesus said, “A woman had ten pieces of silver.” Now if you don’t understand Bible customs, you may not understand this. But when a person got married in those days, the ten pieces of silver were like a wedding band. They would have a hole in the middle of them. The, the bridegroom’s name would be inscribed on those ten pieces of silver. A ribbon would run through those ten pieces of silver. She would wear them on her forehead as a bando. But had she been unfaithful to her husband, one piece of silver would be removed. Can you imagine why she’s so frantically looked for this one piece of silver? She had ten pieces of silver. You see, think of a piece of silver. And no matter how valuable it is, if it’s lost, if it’s lost, it’s worth no more than a wooden nickel—if it’s lost. No matter how valuable it is.

You see, the Bible says, concerning those of us without the Lord Jesus Christ, “We have altogether become unprofitable...” A lost coin cannot be treasured. It cannot be spent. It cannot be enjoyed. It is lost. God made you for a purpose. And what is the

purpose? To give glory to Him. And where was it lost? It was lost in the darkness because she lighted a candle to find it. And the Bible says, “Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”

Sometimes we smile at a child afraid of the dark, but I know a lot of men afraid of the light. They will not come to the light because their deeds are evil. It was lost in the darkness. And it was lost in the dirtiness because she had to take a broom to sweep to find it. Down in the dirt was that coin. And it was lost in disgrace because no longer could she be a pride and a glory to her husband. And Satan has taken so many, and they're lost in the dark, lost in the dirt, lost in disgrace, lost away from God, and they have become unprofitable. And it is Satan's plan to make your life a shame to the glory of God. And Jesus said, “That's why I keep company with them.”

### **III. Lost Sinners Are Like a Lost Son**

And then He said they're like a lost son. Here was this son who came to his father, and he said, “Father, give me my inheritance now. I don't want to wait till you die. I want it now.” Do you know how that translates? I wish you were dead! I wish you were dead! I want my inheritance now. I don't want you and your, in my life. I don't want you. I want what you have. Give it to me. Give it to me now.” And a broken-hearted father gave it to him now. And he left his father's house and went to the far country and wasted his substance in riotous living, high, wide, and handsome. And then the Bible says he became to be in want.

#### **A. The Sinful Nature of Man**

What was this life?

##### **1. A Life of Deprivation**

Well, first of all, it was a life of deprivation. There he is in the hog pen. Today, when people go wrong, we say, “they, they went to the dogs.” He went to the hogs. He's down in the hog pen now, this man who'd been the father's son. This man who lived on the palatial mansion is now down in the hog pen with the swill, the grunting hogs. A life of deprivation. The Bible says he began to be in want. You say, ‘Well, that's not me. I've got a big bankroll, pastor.’ You know your problem? You can't think straight. You don't know what value is. Jesus told that church at Laodicea, “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Spiritually, Jesus is speaking about a person who began to be in want. Plenty in your purse and nothing in your person.

##### **2. A Life of Degradation**

A life of deprivation. A life of degradation. I mean, he never dreamt that he would

end up in the hog pen. It took a long time, but that's where he ended up. And, friend, I'm going to tell you something, and you listen to me. You're going to get where you're headed. Now you just think about that. You may not be there yet, but you are going to get where you are headed. A life of deprivation. A life of degradation. And there he is in the hog pen, and Jesus said, "This is why I keep company with sinners." And so in this story you see the sinful nature of man.

## **B. The Saving Nature of God**

But also in this story you see the saving nature of God. Now listen very carefully. You see, the Lord Jesus shows us for what we are. We're like that lost sheep. We're like that lost silver. We're like that lost son. But in this wonderful story Jesus tells us what God is like. And you see pictured in these three parables God the Son, God the Spirit, and God the Father.

### **1. The Redeeming Nature of God the Son**

For example, the shepherd, when he counts his sheep, and he sees one is lost, he goes out to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:10 says, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Jesus is the good shepherd. Jesus left the ninety and nine in the fold to go look for that one lost sheep.

And that may be you today. You may be that one lost sheep. He sent me here to tell you, He's looking for you. Out on the mountains wild and bleak, the good shepherd is gone to seek His sheep. The good shepherd is Jesus who's come to seek and to save that which is lost. And in the story of the lost sheep you see the rescuing, redeeming nature of God the Son. But what about in the story of the lost coin? What do you learn about God there?

### **2. The Revealing Nature of God the Spirit**

Well, you see not only the, the redeeming nature of God the Son, but you see the revealing nature of God the Spirit. For what did this woman do? She took a broom and began to sweep. She lit a candle and began to look. And that's the ministry of the Holy Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit—what does the Holy Spirit of God do? He illumines. He turns the light on us and we see ourselves in our lost condition there in the darkness. And what does He do? He takes the broom and begins to disturb our lives, a ministry of upheaval. Has He been doing that to you? Then thank God that the Holy Spirit of God is the one who shines the light into our subterranean playpens. And thank God that He's the one that has that broom of conviction. Have you felt that in your heart? That's God stirring up your old heart. He's looking for you. You're that lost silver.

### **3. The Receiving Nature of God the Father**

You see, there is, there is the rescuing nature of God the Son. There's the revealing

nature of God the Spirit. And there is the receiving nature of God the, the Father, of God the Father. This old boy is down in the hog pen. He is eating swill and slop, and he feigned would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and he said to himself, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, "Father, I've sinned against heaven and in thine sight, and no more, am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. I wonder what he must have thought. I wonder if he thought, Will my father receive me? If he does receive me, will he make me a son or will I be a slave? If he does receive me, will I have an inheritance or is that all squandered and gone? But he says, "I'm going to my father." And in an act of repentance and faith he gets up out of that hog pen and comes home.

I want you to imagine a scene that didn't happen. Thank God it didn't happen. When he gets home, the door is locked. He beats on the door. Nobody comes. He knocks louder. After a while, his mother comes and she says, "Oh, it's you." "Mom, Mom, is Dad home? Mom, I need to see Dad." "Well, son, your father's angry. I don't think he wants to see you." "Mom, would you go tell Dad I'm here. Just go tell him I'm here." She says, "I'll tell him." She stays away an interminable length of time. After a while she comes back and says, "Son, this is not a good day. This is not the best time to come." "Mom, did you tell him I was here? Did you tell him that it was me? Mom, tell me exactly what Daddy said." "All right, son. I told your Daddy that his youngest son was here." "Well, Mom, what did he say?" "He said, 'I no longer have a younger son.'" Aren't you glad that's not the way the story goes? Aren't you glad it didn't end that way? There's the old couple sitting on the front porch of the home. And, and they look down that road, and they see this man, a wasted coming, ragged, limping, impoverished, but there's something about his gait. The father recognizes him. And the Bible says, "While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him..." That means he was looking for him, just like He's looking for you.

And then the Bible says the father ran to him. In Bible times, an old man didn't run anywhere. Beneath his dignity. And he is a picture of God the Father. And you never see God in a hurry in the Bible. He always moves in majestic deliberateness. But I can see that old man as he gathers up his robe around and holds it and begins to run down the road till he gets to where that boy was and puts his arm around his neck and falls on his neck and kisses him and hugs him and says to the servant, "Bring a ring. Put it on his hand. Put a robe on his back. Put shoes on his feet. And, Mama, kill the fatted calf and let's rejoice, for our son has come home."

## **Conclusion**

Now, friend, that's homecoming. That is homecoming. And that's the God we serve. That's the God we serve. And if you want to come home, if you've wandered far away from God—maybe you're saved and backslidden. God sent me to tell you, "Come on home." Maybe you're lost and have never been saved. You're that lost sheep. You're that lost silver. You are that lost son. Welcome home!

# Seeing the World Through the Eyes of Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: February 6, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15**

*"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."*

LUKE 15:2

## Outline

Introduction

- I. 53 Heading 2 Roman Numbered
  - A. Part 1, Subpart A – 55 Heading 3 Upper Lettered
    - 1. 56 Heading 4 Arabic Numbered
      - a. 57 Heading 5 Lower Alpha Lettered
        - i. 58 Heading 6 Lower Roman Numbered

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles today and turn to Luke the fifteenth chapter. Now normally we would be in 1 Peter, but I'm going to take a respite from 1 Peter this morning and say something to you that's on my heart. A few days ago I spoke to the Arkansas Baptist Evangelism Conference at their convention over there, and I brought a message that I want to bring to you. And it seemed as though when I was preaching that message, the Lord was saying to me, "Adrian, I want you to share this with the people of Bellevue." And again last Friday I had this impressed on my heart, and again yesterday. So I want to share with you from the fifteenth chapter of Luke. The title of the message is: "Seeing the World through the Eyes of Christ."

And, incidentally, if you didn't bring a Bible with you today, out there in the pew rack there ought to be a Bible. Just get it, and turn to page 1016. That will be the fifteenth chapter of Luke, I believe. And those of you who have Bibles and can't find it, put yours up, and get one of those, and you'll know the page number. All right, 1016, if you are using one of these pew Bibles. And all of us ought to have an open Bible in our hand. We'll get so much more from any message if we'll do so. And I want us to begin reading here in verse 1: "*Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.*" Now the publicans were the tax collectors, and they were no more popular in that day

than they are in this day. As a matter of fact, “*publicans and sinners*” was almost like one word; they just linked all publicans with sinners and all sinners with publicans. And these were the down and out. “*And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured...*”—now the Pharisees, the scribes, these were the upper crusts of that day. Somebody said, “The upper crust is a lot of crumbs held together by dough.” But these were crumbs who were held together by religion. These were the religious people of that day—“*And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*” (Luke 15:1–2) That is, they began to criticize Jesus. You know, it’s so easy to criticize. Somebody has well said, “It doesn’t take much size to criticize.” Some people are noted for their criticism. One pastor said, “Brother Jones, will you please stand and lead us in a word of criticism?” It’s so easy to criticize, and these Pharisees were criticizing the Lord Jesus.

Well, let’s see what they criticized him for: “*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*”—that’s what they criticized Him for. I, for one, am glad He’s still in the business of receiving sinners, aren’t you? You’d better be; or, friend, He would not receive you—“*This man receiveth sinners...*”—nor would He receive me—“*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*” Jesus was a friend of sinners. Now because of this criticism, Jesus answered them. And so the next verse: “*And he spake this parable unto them.*” (Luke 15:2–3)

Now, notice it doesn’t say, “These parables,” but “*this parable*”—because so many people think this fifteenth chapter has three or four parables in it, but this is just one parable in three or four parts. It is a parable that tells the story of a lost sheep, the parable that tells the story of some lost silver, and then a parable that tells a story of a lost son—but all just one parable. It is singular—one parable with three parts—to teach a tremendous message.

In this parable Jesus is telling us how He sees this world. And we have the ability to see the world through the eyes of Jesus Christ, to see men as Jesus saw them, and then also to see God as Jesus revealed God. And so we are going to see the sinful nature of man and the saving nature of God. And it’s going to be a blessing to us, not because I am the preacher—that’s not why it is going to be a blessing—but because of the great truth that is here it is going to be a blessing.

## **I. The Weakness of Man without God**

Now Jesus is answering the question why He keeps company with publicans and sinners. And the first answer to that question is because they are weak like a sheep. And He tells us the parable of the lost sheep. Notice in verse 4: “*What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found*

*it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”* (Luke 15:4–7)

And so Jesus is speaking of the weakness of man without God. He’s like a sheep. You know, it is not like a real compliment to be called a sheep. You know, let me tell you several things about a sheep.

### **A. A Sheep Is Dumb**

In the first place, a sheep is dumb. That’s right: dumb. Now you may have heard of a trained horse and seen a trained cat or a trained seal. Or I’ve even heard of trained fleas. Has anybody ever seen a circus act where the sheep were in it? Trained sheep? They’re just stupid. You can’t train them. They are dumb. A sheep is dumb. And therefore, because he is dumb, he is easily lost. A sheep can’t find his way home: he just wanders. That’s the reason the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 53, “*All we like*”—what?—“*sheep have gone astray.*” (Isaiah 53:6) A sheep has gone astray. It’s just the nature of a sheep to go astray. He’ll nibble here, and browse here, and feed here; and first thing you know, he’s lost and can’t find his way home. A dog can find his way home. A horse can find his way home. A cow can find her way home. A cat—have you ever tried to get rid of a cat? There’s about one way: put them in a bag. Well, I won’t say that. It’s hard to get rid of those things. They come home. But a sheep, he just keeps on wandering. And so a sheep is stupid.

Now you say, “Now, wait a minute. I’m not a Christian, but I’m not stupid.” Right. You’re smart. You made good grades in school, and you run your business, and you manage your home, and you’re very intelligent. But we’re not talking about that kind of stupid. A man may be brilliant in this world, but spiritually he’s without understanding. You know, the Bible says in Romans chapter 3, “*There is none that understandeth...no, not one*” (Romans 3:11–12)—none that understandeth in spiritual things. That’s the reason that Jesus had to say to Nicodemus, who was one of the high muckety-mucks in his day, “You are master in Israel, but you don’t understand these things; you don’t understand the new birth.” I mean, he had it all. He had a pedigree. He had the background. He had education. He had it all. But he didn’t understand spiritual things.

### **B. A Sheep Is Dependent**

But not only is a sheep dumb; a sheep is also dependent. Did you know that a sheep has to have someone to take care of him, or something will get him? It’s just that true; it’s just that simple. That’s the reason the Bible says of Jesus, “*When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were*

*scattered abroad, as a sheep having no shepherd.*” (Matthew 9:36) A sheep needs a shepherd, because a sheep is dependent upon the shepherd. That is, you just don’t let the sheep go out on the dangerous hillside alone like you might some other animal, because he is so dependent.

Keller, in his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, tells the condition that a sheep may get into, in which he says that a sheep is cast. That is an old English term, an English shepherd’s term, for a sheep that gets himself in a predicament that he cannot get out of. What he does is this: the sheep sometimes, after feeding upon the tender, succulent grass, will lie down in the warm sun to rest. And as he stretches, if he is not on level ground, there may be a crevice there or a hollow place in the ground, and the center of gravity will shift on the sheep, and he rolls over on his back with his paws and legs up in the air. And he cannot get over it to push himself up or right himself, because he’s not agile enough to do this. So he just falls frantically in the air. Sometimes he may bleat and call for help; but many times he will just lie there in confusion and frustration, just pawing. Now as he does this, the gases begin to build up in his abdomen, and he bloats. And this cuts off the circulation to his legs. And in a few hours, he will be dead—just lying there, absolutely, completely, helpless. And so the shepherd, when he gets back to the fold at night, will count the sheep, because one of them may be out there on his back, and he must go. For, you see, the shepherd must take that sheep and right him up. He cannot rise; he cannot get up by himself.

### **C. A Sheep Is Defenseless**

But the shepherd is not the only one that watches for a sheep like that. The coyotes, the wolves, the vultures are watching for this sheep. You see, the sheep is dumb, and the sheep is dependent; but I will tell you something else about a sheep: he’s defenseless. A sheep can’t defend himself. He’s not equipped for flight or fight. A horse can run and kick. The dog can bite. The cat can scratch. The skunk—we all know what they can do. You heard of the little baby skunk with the mother skunk cornered in a cave by a fox, and it looked like the fox was going to get them, but the mother skunk said to her children, “Children, let us spray.” The sheep has no defense. The sheep is at the mercy of those animals, those wolves, those vultures, those other things.

Some visitors, some tourists, were in the Scottish highlands, and they were looking at the scenery—the mountain scene. And as they were on one mountain looking across the valley, one of them said to the guide, “What is that animal over there on the sheer face of the cliff across the ravine?” “Oh,” he said, “that’s a sheep.” He put his glasses on it. He said, “Take a look.” The visitor said, “How did he get down there?” He said, “Well, the sheep, many times, feeding in this area will go from one ledge to another ledge looking for a morsel, a bit of grass, and they step down. When they get to a certain

place, they sometimes get on a very narrow ledge where they cannot turn around and go back. And that sheep will perish.” “Well,” the visitor said, “what will happen to him?” He said, “The eagles will get him.” He said, “Do you want to stay and watch?” And he said, “Yes.” And so before too long they saw five mighty eagles flying through that valley. The lead eagle spotted the helpless, defenseless sheep, and he folded his wings like a bomber diving and hit that sheep on the head. When he did, it stunned the sheep, and he went to his knees. But then he rose up again, and the old eagle flew off. But then he circled again and dived again and hit the head of that sheep—stunned him. The sheep went to his knees. The old eagle flew off. The sheep, this time bleeding from the head, rose and looked around frantically and turned around to try to scramble back up the mountainside. And of course, the ledge was so narrow, and the sheep plunged to his death on the rocks beneath. And those five eagles zeroed in for the feast. A sheep is so defenseless.

And what Jesus was saying when He talked about a lost sheep was this: We are no match for the devil’s eagles; we are no match for the devil’s wolves; we are no match for the devil’s coyotes and the devil’s vultures. What He is saying is, “The reason that I keep company with these people is because they so need me”—the weakness of man without God.

## **II. The Worthlessness of Man without God**

But not only did Jesus speak of the weakness of man without God; Jesus also, my dear friend, spoke of the worthlessness of man without God. Continue to read here in the fifteenth chapter. Look in verse 8. And Jesus said, *“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”* (Luke 15:8–10) Not only is man like a lost sheep; he is like lost silver. And Jesus is speaking of that which is out of circulation.

You see, silver, a coin has been minted and made for a purpose: it is meant to be spent; it is meant to be treasured; it is meant to be valued, but not to be lost. **You see, when a coin is lost, it is worthless to the owner and to the maker. It doesn’t matter how valuable it may be intrinsically. If it’s lost, it is lost. Which is worth more on the ocean floor: a hundred-dollar gold piece or a nickel? As long as it’s on the ocean floor, both are of the same value. And as long as you are lost, you are out of circulation.** Again, in the book of Romans, the Bible speaks of the unsaved man, and it says, *“They are together become unprofitable.”* (Romans 3:12) You see, God made you for a purpose. God wants you in circulation to spend and be spent for His glory and to bring glory and honor

to Him. But we are lost and out of circulation, useless and worthless without Christ; not only the weakness of man without God, but the worthlessness of man without God.

And where was it lost?

### A. **Lost in Darkness**

Well, it's very interesting. If you'll look in verse 8, the Bible says, "If she lost this piece, first of all, she lights a candle." (Luke 15:8) So it was lost in the darkness. Every man without Christ is lost in the darkness. You see, he cannot see. Sin has blinded him. He's in darkness. And not only is he lost in the darkness; he hates the darkness. Jesus said, "They hate the light, and they will not come to the light, because their deeds are evil." (John 3:20)

### B. **Lost in Dirtiness**

But not only was it lost in the darkness; it was lost in the dirtiness—because not only did she light a candle; she took a broom and started to sweep the house. I don't believe she had been a very good housekeeper. And she's starting to sweep the house now and stir around the dirt, because somewhere down in that dirt was that coin. Again, this is Jesus' way of saying that a man without God is in darkness and in dirtiness. You say, "Now, wait a minute: I keep a nice house." I'm not talking about that. You say, "Well, I'm a nice moral person." I'm not talking about that. Friend, I want to tell you that all sin is filth. Now it may be high-class filth, but it's filth.

Do you know what Jesus said about our goodness? You know, so many times we say, "Well, I may be a sinner; but, my goodness, I'm not in filth." Do you know what Jesus says about your righteousness? He says, "Even your righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight." (Isaiah 64:6) I'm not talking about your badness; your goodness—lost in dirtiness. I told you before, *the worst form of badness is human goodness, when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth*. That's the worst form of badness.

### C. **Lost in Disgracefulness**

But, you see, not only was it lost in darkness, and dirtiness; it was lost in disgracefulness. Now, look again at this verse. It says that she had ten pieces of silver. (Luke 15:8) Ten is the complete number. Seven is the perfect number; ten, the complete number in the Bible. And so it is something here that is incomplete. She had ten pieces of silver.

But you need to understand what these were. You see, this is not just any ten pieces of silver. Scholars tell us that this refers to the bandeaux that a bride would wear upon her forehead. That is, it is much like our wedding ring. In that day, when a man would marry a woman, he would give her ten pieces of jewelry, and his name would be

engraved on each of them. And there would be a hole through the center of each of them through which a ribbon might go. And then she would tie this around her forehead. And many of you have seen pictures of Middle Eastern women wearing those coins around their forehead. It's very similar to our wedding rings, or our engagement rings, that we give. It was a token of her husband's love and affection and so forth. And she was to wear it as a token of her reciprocal love and affection and devotion to him. But should she be caught in unfaithfulness, should she be an adulteress, one of those coins might be taken from the very center with a hideous gap to show that she had been unfaithful to her husband.

Now you can understand why she was looking for it. Now you can understand why she wanted it back. I mean, what woman here, of all the things you would hate to lose, wouldn't you hate to lose your wedding ring or your engagement ring? Can you just imagine that your wedding ring was lost; your engagement ring was lost? Here she is, frantically searching, because not only was it lost in darkness, and not only was it lost in dirtiness; it was lost in disgracefulness. She had been disgraced. And it is Satan's plan to make your life a disgrace to God rather than a glory to God.

### **III. The Wretchedness of Man Without God**

And so Jesus is answering the question: "Why do I keep company with these people?" Number one: because of their weakness—like a lost sheep. Number two: because of their worthlessness—like a lost coin. But, number three: because of their wretchedness—like a lost son. Now I want you to continue to read here in verse 11: *"And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of [my inheritance] that falleth to me."* (Luke 15:11–12) Now that may seem heartless. That's what he said. But, you see, when is the inheritance divided? When the father dies. What he was saying was, "I wish you were dead. I don't want you; I want yours. I want what you have. I don't want your authority. I don't want your fellowship. All I want are those things that your money can buy to give me pleasure." Like people today who say, "God, I'm content to walk your green earth; I am content to breathe your fresh air; I am content to use your rain and your sunshine; but, God, just stay out of my life. You owe it all to me. I don't owe it to you. I want these things—these physical, material things—but I don't want the One who has provided them." He says, "Give me." And the father, with a quivering, broken heart, gives to this young man his inheritance.

And then in verse 13: *"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and [journeyed] into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."* Off to New Orleans he went. Off to San Francisco. Off to New York he went. Off to St. Louis he went. I don't know where he went, but he went somewhere. And there he

began to spend money like water. Wine, women, and song: high, wide and handsome he was living. He was doing fine for a while, but then look in verse 14: *“When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land;”*—that’s just another way of saying a depression—*“and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.”* He said, “Maybe I can never come home again as a son, but at least I can come home as a hired servant, as a slave there” *“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son”*—“make me as one of your hired servants.” *“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:”*—I wish I had time to comment on verses 22 and 23. Oh, how rich the symbolism there! But he goes on to say—*“for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”* (Luke 15:13–24)

Now Jesus is giving here the third reason that He keeps company with sinners—and the third reason He ministers to them is not only because of their weakness like a lost sheep, not only because of their worthlessness like a lost coin, but also because of their wretchedness like a lost son. And if ever there was a picture of wretchedness, here was a picture of wretchedness.

Now, notice what this man gets himself into.

### A. **Depression**

First of all, there is depression. The Bible says, *“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land.”* (Luke 15:14) Now, what is Jesus telling us? Jesus is telling us; no matter what you depend on; no matter how wealthy you are; no matter what you depend on, friend, it’s going to leave you, or you are going to leave it—I mean, the things of this world. And there is coming a time when you’re going to run out of resources—out of breath, out of life, out of strength. You are coming. You may have a lot of money in the bank; but, friend, behind this story and beyond this story is the greater spiritual meaning of the impoverished condition of any man, of any woman, without the Lord Jesus Christ.

## B. Degradation

There was, first of all, depression; but then, right after depression, degradation. Notice this—the Bible says his friends forsook him, and he went and became a servant of a man of that country. (Luke 15:15) He had been a son in the father's house; now he's a slave in the far country. And every man without Christ becomes a slave.

Now, where does he send him? He puts him into his fields to feed swine. Now, can you imagine this? This is a Jewish boy. This is a Jewish audience. He's talking to the scribes and the Pharisees, the Jewish elite. A self-respecting Jew in that day would not touch a hog with a ten-foot pole, and here's this boy down in the hog pen slopping the hogs. I mean, he is as low as you can get. Today we talk about people "going to the dogs." In that day, they went to the hogs. He is in the hog pen. Now everyone knew what he meant. Not only was there a depression—he spent all—but there was also degradation—he sent him into the fields to feed the swine.

An old preacher told me a long time ago, "Adrian, don't forget this: I want to tell you about sin." He said, "Sin will take you further than you want to go, sin will keep you longer than you want to stay, and sin will cost you more than you want to pay." Now the idea is, when this boy left home, he had no idea he was going to end in the hog pen. You say, "Well, I'm going to do all right." Friend, I'm going to tell you where you are headed. Just read what Jesus says. And little do we understand the power of sin in our lives. You cannot play with sin. "Sin will take further than you want to go. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. Sin will cost you more than you want to pay."

## C. Dissatisfaction

And so, here is depression. Here is degradation. And here is dissatisfaction. The next verse says, "*And he would have fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.*" (Luke 15:16) That is, he has a gnawing hunger within him. Now there is a deeper meaning to the story. Jesus is going beyond the mere fact of physical hunger. What He is saying is this: The husks of this world and the swine swill of this world will never satisfy the longings of your heart. You have a hunger that can only be met at the Father's house.

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

HARRY D. LOES

There is a hunger. I will tell you, I don't care how much money you have; how famous you are; how many friends surround you; how handsome, beautiful, charming, or witty you may be—down in your heart there is a hunger that only God can meet. God made

you for Himself. Augustine said, “Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our souls are restless until they rest in thee.” And so, here was a man in dissatisfaction.

Jesus is painting a picture of wretchedness. You may be wearing a mask this morning; but, friend, down in your heart there is a wretchedness if you are without God. I know that’s true of every man. And so they criticized Jesus. They said, “Why are you keeping company with these people?” He said, “I’ll tell you why: They are in weakness like a lost sheep. They are in worthlessness like a lost coin. They are in wretchedness like a lost son.”

#### **IV. The Saving Nature of God**

But not only did Jesus in these parables, these stories, give a picture of the sinfulness of man; but let’s just turn it around and see the saving nature of God, because, you see, in this story there were three who were in the business of restoring and bringing back. There’s the story of a seeking shepherd who went after the lost sheep; and that seeking shepherd represents God the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd. In this story there was a weeping woman who went after the lost coin. She is a picture of God the Holy Spirit. And then in this story there is a picture of a faithful father receiving the lost son. And that is a picture of God the Father. And you see here the nature, the character, of God. You see God as a shepherd. You see God as a woman seeking a lost coin. You see God as a Father, receiving a lost son.

##### **A. The Rescuing Nature of God the Son**

Now, let’s look at the shepherd as he goes on and the shepherd seeks his sheep. Why? Because it is the nature of the shepherd. *“The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”* Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd.”* (John 10:11) Let me tell you something. Do you know what the nature of Jesus Christ is today? Do you know what the nature of Christ is? It is His nature to rescue lost sinners. Do you know why Jesus Christ came into this world? Jesus Christ came into this world to save the lost.

You say, “That’s a truism.” Well, I don’t think some people realize that today. The Bible says in Luke 19, verse 10, *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) That is why He came. Paul said, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”* (1 Timothy 1:15) Jesus did not come primarily as a healer. Jesus did not come primarily as a teacher. Jesus came as a Savior. And he said, *“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”* (John 20:21)

Now if the Father sent the Savior to seek lost sheep, what is my job? What is your job? Every now and then some church says, “Well, we’re going to spend a month majoring on evangelism.” That would be a like a railroad saying, “We’re going to spend a month majoring on transportation.” Let me tell you something, friend: That is our major

twelve months a year, 365 days in that year—any church. You see, that’s not an option; that is a command from God. *“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”* And every person in this building who has Jesus Christ in Him is going to have the nature of Jesus Christ in Him, and the nature of Jesus Christ is to bring those lost sheep.

Now if you are not concerned about souls, you’d better get saved. You do not know the Christ of this Bible. You do not have the nature of Jesus. It is the nature of Jesus to rescue the lost—to rescue the lost, to care for the dying, to snatch them in pity from sin and the grave; to weep o’er the erring one, to lift up the falling one, to bring them to Jesus, the mighty to save. And so here we see Jesus Himself as pictured by that good shepherd going and seeking that one lost sheep. “Out on the mountainside wild and weary goes the good shepherd,” as the song “The Ninety and Nine” tells us.

## **B. The Revealing Nature of God the Spirit**

But wait a moment: Not only do we see the rescuing nature of God the Son; we also see the revealing nature of God the Spirit. Look again, if you will, in verse 8, as He talks about the woman seeking the silver: *“What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?”* (Luke 15:8) And again, this is the Holy Spirit seeking. But the Holy Spirit seeks in a different way.

What is the Holy Spirit pictured here doing?

### **1. Lighting a Candle**

First of all, lighting a candle—because this speaks of the illumination of the Spirit. You see, it is the nature of the Spirit to reveal. It is the nature of the Son to rescue. But it is the nature of the Spirit to reveal. You see, the Holy Spirit today is that candle that is shining into your heart, into that dark place where you are lost, to give the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. No one can be saved until they are brought under conviction and are illumined by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit of God that shines into our darkened hearts.

### **2. Sweeping**

But not only that—not only did she light a candle, but she takes a broom and begins to sweep. What does the broom picture? Disturbance, as she is sweeping; disturbing, moving things around. It is that stirring of the Spirit of God. Oh, I thank God in my heart one day that light shined and that broom started to stir and stir that dirt, that filth, around, and the light just shined into it. I was that lost coin. I was that one in darkness. I was that one in dirtiness. I was that one in disgrace. But thank God for the light. Thank God for the candle. Thank God for the Spirit. He shined into my darkened heart and revealed the love of God to me.

### C. The Receiving Nature of God the Father

It is the nature of God to rescue. It is the nature of God to reveal. It is the nature of God to receive. Remember this story that I read to you about the lost son? Remember that he said, *“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son... And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”* (Luke 15:18–20)

Now, get the picture. Here’s the son in the hog pen in the far country. He finally comes to himself. That is, he comes to his right mind. The father has never stopped loving him. The father is there on the porch of the old family home place. He’s sitting there. He has been to the mailbox many times, but no mail. He has asked strangers, “Have you seen my son?” No word. But as he’s looking down that old road with his keen eye, he sees a figure. A man is walking. He’s dressed in rags. He’s thin and emaciated; perhaps riddled with disease. But the father’s eye recognizes his son. There is something about the gait of that young man, perhaps the way he swings his arms or tosses his head. He says, “That’s my boy!” And over the banister he goes. He gathers up those robes and he runs down that road to meet him.

Now in the Bible we say God is never in a hurry and God is never late. God moves with deliberate majesty. But, friend, here is one time with a picture of God running, the only place in the Bible where God is running. He is literally running to meet this one. He is running to receive him, to gather him, to bring him. And He runs and falls on His neck. I want to tell, you dear friend—listen to me—it is the nature of God to receive. I don’t care what you’ve done, how bad you’ve been, how far away you’ve been, how you’ve disgraced and dishonored God: if there is anybody in this building today who will start out for God right down on one of these aisles, the God of glory will run down the other side to meet you, throw His arms around you, and kiss you on the neck, put His arms around you and receive you. That’s what keeps me in the business of preaching the gospel. I know that Jesus said, *“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”* (John 6:37) And the Bible says, “Whosoever will, may come.” (Revelation 22:17)

And this old man comes and he puts his arms around the neck of this youngster, and he kisses him, and he says, “Bring a robe for his back; bring shoes for his feet”—the slaves didn’t wear shoes—“bring a ring for his hand.” (Luke 15:22) That was the sign of authority, of sonship, of restoration. *“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”* (Luke 15:24) Oh, the rejoicing in heaven this morning when anybody comes down this aisle to give their heart to Jesus! I want to say, there’s a party in heaven, there’s a holy commotion in heaven, over one sinner that repents. Jesus would have died for one sinner, had he been the only one who needed it. He died for the world, but He would have died for any one of

you all by yourself. Oh, what joy there is in heaven over one sinner that repents!

Years ago when I preached on this text, I shared a story with you that I read a long time ago, and it moves my heart every time I retell it. An old preacher was on a train one day and he was taking a trip. And he noticed across the aisle there was a young man, and that young man was obviously nervous. He had what we call the fidgets. And the preacher, who knew the ways of people, and who had counseled with many people in his career, knew that this young man was in distress. And so he moved over and sat by him and introduced himself to this young man and said, "Son, I'm a minister of the gospel, and I've been watching you; and I believe you're in distress. You've got a problem, don't you, son?" He said, "Yes sir, I do." He said, "Well, do you think it might help if we talked about it?" He said, "Maybe I could help you and pray for you." He said, "Mister, I don't know if you could help or not, but let me tell you my story."

He said, "Years ago, I had a terrible fight with my parents. My parents are good people, decent people, kind and loving people. But I was young and arrogant and stupid and foolish, and I got into an argument with my mother and my dad. And in the heat of that argument I swore to them that I was going to leave home and never come back again. And I slammed the door behind me and turned my back on my own mother and on my own father." He said, "It was stupid. It was pride. I was arrogant and willful." He said, "I've been gone from home for many years now and received word from a friend that my dad is sick and perhaps near death. I don't want my dad to die without my seeing him and expressing my love to him. I want to come home. I wrote my parents and I told them that I wanted to come home. And I told them I would be on this train, because, you see, sir, this train runs past our house. The tracks run through where our backyard is." And he said, "In our back yard there's a certain tree. And I told my parents if they wanted me to come home, if they would allow me to come home, to tie a handkerchief on one of the limbs of that tree. And I would be on this train, and I would be watching. If I saw the handkerchief, I would get off at the station and go home. If I didn't see the handkerchief, I would just keep moving, just riding on." And he said, "The reason I'm so nervous is that just around the bend is that tree, and I'm afraid to look. I'm just afraid the handkerchief will not be there." He said, "You don't know how mean I was to my parents. I said some terrible things to them. I don't know whether they can find it in their hearts to forgive me and let me come home one more time."

The preacher said, "Son, you just bow your head and pray: I'll look." And the boy put his head in his hands and his face, buried them there and closed his eyes. The old preacher strained his eyes to look and a tear came to his eyes and a prayer from his heart. He said, "God, let that handkerchief be there; Lord, please." And as the train rounded the bend, the preacher saw a sight, and when he saw it, he grabbed the young man and said, "Son, look!" And the youngster lifted His head and looked, and that old

couple had gotten every bed sheet, every pillow case, every bit of linen they could get, and covered that tree from top to bottom—it looked like a mountain of snow—to say, “Son, I love you.”

Friend, that is exactly what God is saying in this parable: “It doesn’t matter what you’ve done. I love you. And whosoever will, may come.” It is the receiving nature of God. The same God who ran and fell on the neck of that prodigal so long ago is the God in glory who is waiting there to receive you today.

## **Conclusion**

And so they criticized Jesus for keeping company with sinners; but Jesus said, “I’ll tell you why I do it: I do it because of their weakness—like a lost sheep; because of their worthlessness—like a lost coin; because of their wretchedness—like a lost son. But I do it for another reason: because it is the rescuing nature of the Son to do it; it is the revealing nature of the Spirit to do it; it is the receiving nature of the Father to do it.” And God told me to tell you today that He loves you, and He wants you to come home. And this message is God the Holy Spirit turning on the light and taking the broom and just stirring your heart that you might come through the Son to the Father, who throws His arms open wide and says, “Come home.”

# Homecoming

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 19, 1978**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15:1–24**

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to Luke chapter 15. I want to speak on this subject: “Homecoming.” Luke chapter 15—I read the first three verses: “*Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying*” (Luke 15:1–3)—and then, the Lord Jesus gave one parable, not three parables, as is sometimes said, or four parables, but one parable with three parts. And, it tells of three lost things: there was a lost sheep; there was lost silver, and there was a lost son. And, the Lord Jesus gave this story, or this parable, to the Pharisees. Now, the Pharisees had been criticizing Jesus for keeping company with sinners. Now, the Pharisees were the self-righteous people, and they hated the Lord Jesus Christ. In these Pharisees, the milk of human kindness had curdled. They hated

the Lord Jesus Christ, and they especially criticized Him for receiving sinners. There is a class of people in this world today who just don't believe that sinners ought to be forgiven and that sinners ought to be received by the Lord.

The last time Charles Colson, of Watergate fame—or infamy, if you care to put it—was here in town, I was eating with Mr. Colson, and he told me of a newspaper reporter in this city who interviewed him. And, she was quite snide with him, and she was talking to him a little bit about his being saved. Of course, she didn't understand what the new birth was or what being born again is, but she was quite indignant about the whole thing. And, she said Mr. Colson, "After all you've done, I want to ask you this question: What right do you have to be born again?" You think about that: "What right do you have, Mr. Colson, to be born again?" as though salvation is only for good people, only for righteous people. Oh, dear friend, this is a faith full worthy of all expectation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I, for one, am very glad that He's still receiving sinners, aren't you? Because if He were not receiving sinners—aren't you?—because if He were not still receiving sinners, I don't know where I would be.

My friend and your friend, Peter Lord, has a wonderful church down there in Florida, and over the portals of the doors of that church he has a sign written: "Sinners only welcome here." Now, what would you have done this morning if you had come to church and seen over the portal of this church, "Sinners only here"? Oh, let me tell you, friend, this place, this church—sinners are welcome, because it's the place that Jesus wants them and wishes to welcome them. And so, the Lord Jesus Christ gave this story in the presence of those who were criticizing Him for receiving sinners. And, in this story, this morning, there are so many things that we could see, but I want you to see with me this morning something of the nature of man and something of the nature of God. The reason that the Lord Jesus Christ kept company with sinners, the reason the Lord Jesus Christ received sinners was, first of all, the nature of man and then, secondly, the nature of God.

## **I. The Nature of Man**

Well, what is the nature of man?

### **A. The Weakness of Man Without God**

Well, in the first place, man is weak without God. The first thing I want you to see is the weakness of man without God. I'm reading here Luke chapter 15, now, beginning with verse 4: Jesus said, *"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing."*

*And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. [And] I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, [that] need no repentance” (Luke 15:4–7). We’re thinking about the weakness of man without God.*

And, the Lord Jesus says, “The reason that I love them and the reason that I keep company with them is they’re like a sheep that’s strayed.” Now, you know, so many times, we think of a sheep in glowing terms; but friend, it’s not really a compliment to be called a sheep. Our Lord was not trying to compliment us when He said we are like sheep. Now, most of us think of a lamb as cuddly, and innocent, and so forth. But, let me tell you what the Lord meant when He said we were like sheep—let me tell you three things about a sheep.

### **1. A Sheep Is Dumb**

First of all, a sheep is dumb. Did you know that? I mean, he’s stupid. One of the stupidest animals on this earth is a sheep, and the Lord said that *“we [are] like sheep that have gone astray”* (Isaiah 53:6). Now, I know that you’ve never heard of a trained sheep; I don’t believe you have. Now, you’ve heard of trained elephants. You’ve heard of trained horses. You’ve heard of trained dogs. You may even have heard, per chance, of a trained flea. But, you don’t hear of a trained sheep. A sheep can’t be trained. A sheep is stupid, and *“we like sheep have gone astray”* (Isaiah 53:6).

Did you know that there are some men and women here who are otherwise brilliant who are absolutely spiritually stupid—ignorant of spiritual things? You may have a PhD in psychology, religion—it might stand for “Phenomenal Dud.” Nicodemus was a master in Israel, but he did not understand spiritual things. And, because a sheep is so stupid, it’s easily lost. A sheep just browses. He nibbles away from the sheepfold; and from the shepherd, he just keeps on wandering. Other animals find their way home. A horse comes home. The ox comes home. Have you ever tried to throw away a cat? A cat comes home. Dogs can find their way home, but not a sheep. For the Bible says in Isaiah 53, verse 6: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way”* (Isaiah 53:6).

### **2. A Sheep Is Dependent**

But, notice—not only is a sheep dumb, but a sheep is dependent. You are... A sheep is so helpless, and a sheep can get himself into a mess that he can’t get himself out of. There’s an interesting book that’s written. I want to recommend that you read it. It’s called **A SHEPHERD LOOKS AT PSALM 23**. It’s written by Mr. Keller. Many of you have already read it. Incidentally, how many of you have seen that book? Let me see your

hand. Okay, that's maybe 300 people in this congregation that have read this book. This man, who himself was a shepherd and now is a marvelous Christian, told us so many things about sheep. But, he talks about a cast—C-A-S-T—a cast sheep. You know, David says, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*" (Psalm 42:5). And, this man believes that's what David is referring to. And, an Old English term shepherders used to use is for a sheep to be "cast."

Now, what does it mean for a sheep to be cast? Well, sometimes the woolly, fat sheep will go out and lie down in the little ravine or a little crevice. And he, after he has browsed and eaten, he'll stretch himself out and roll over. And, if he's in a piece of ground that's not quite level, he'll roll over just enough that his feet come off the ground. And, when his feet comes off the ground, he struggles to put his feet back on the ground. And, his center of gravity will shift, and his feet will go up in the air. And, his paws can't touch the ground, and there's nothing he can do to get back on his feet. He is a cast sheep, or he is a cast-down sheep. And, he may bleat for a little bit, but he will frantically paw the air. And, gasses begin to build up in his intestines, and it cuts off the circulation from his legs. And, if it's a hot day in just a few hours that sheep will die. And, that's the reason that when the shepherd gets back to the fold, he counts the sheep to see if all the sheep are there, for he fears that one of the sheep may be cast down and cannot get back up. And so, the shepherd makes his way back, and finds the sheep, and puts it back on his feet, and massages the limbs until the circulation comes back, because the sheep, dear friend, is so dependent. You see, it's not only the shepherd that seeks out a cast sheep. It's also the eagle that does it. It's also the coyote that does it. It's also the predator that does it, because they know that the sheep, a cast sheep, is an easy prey.

### **3. A Sheep Is Defenseless**

Friend, are you cast down? You say, "Oh, I just can't get back on my feet. I'm in a mess I can't get out of." No wonder the Lord called us sheep. All right now, let me tell you something else: now listen, not only is the sheep dull, and not only is the sheep dependent, but also, a sheep is defenseless. Have you ever thought about it? I mean, what can a sheep do to protect itself? A horse can run. A dog can bite. A cat can scratch. I even heard of a mother skunk and some baby skunks who were cornered back in a cage by a fox, and there seemed to be no way out. And, the mother skunk said to her babies, "Children, let us spray." All of us have some means of defense, but I wonder, what can a poor sheep do? Absolutely nothing. That's the reason we think of a lamb being led to a slaughter as someone that is absolutely helpless.

I was reading a while back about some people who were visiting the highlands, and as they were visiting, they were looking across a valley to another mountain. And, a

man had his binoculars, and he said, “Look down there,” and he said, “Look down there on that hillside. It looks like a sheep to me.” And, the guide took the binoculars and said, “Yes, it is a sheep. And, let’s see—it is a sheep.” And, he said, “The sheep feeding on these mountainsides will sometimes go down from ledge, and nibble some grass, and see what looks like greener grass, and go down another ledge. And then, one time it will jump down a ledge that is too narrow on these steep mountainside for it to turn around and get back, and it’s trapped. And, it will never get back unless someone comes and lifts it.” And so, the tourist said to the guide, “What will happen to it?” And, the guide said, “The eagles will get it.” He said, “As a matter of fact, if you walk away, we’ll watch and see.” And, it was not long until five mighty eagles came flying through that valley. They were flying in formation, and a huge eagle was leading the group.

When they saw that sheep there on the mountainside—that defenseless sheep—that mighty eagle circled overhead, and then fell like a stone, and hit that sheep on the head, knocked it to it’s knees. And, the sheep got up again. And, this time that eagle circled again and it came down, down, like a hammer and bit the sheep on the head again. This time the sheep was frightened, and tried to turn around on that narrow edge, and leap up the mountainside, but it fell over backwards, hundreds of feet down to the rocks and was crushed. And, five eagles had their dinner. Now, a sheep is defenseless, and what Jesus was saying here was that one of His sheep is no match for the devil’s eagles without the Good Shepherd. That’s what He’s saying.

And, they criticized Jesus for keeping company with sinners, and Jesus said, “I’ll tell you why I do it—because of the weakness of man without God. He’s like a sheep gone astray. He’s so dumb. He is so dependent. He is so defenseless, and that’s why I keep company with sinners.”

## **B. The Worthlessness of Man Without God**

But, not only the weakness of man without God—also, the worthlessness of man without God. Jesus told another story. I want you to begin reading now in verse 8. Jesus continues this story: *“Either what women having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth”* (Luke 15:8–10). Now, Jesus is no longer speaking of the lost sheep. Now, Jesus is speaking of the lost silver. And, He shows it from another perspective. Now, He’s not talking about weakness but worthlessness. You see, a lost coin is absolutely worthless; it’s out of circulation. It’s not doing the thing that it was created and brought into

existence to do. It is no good to be spent; it is no good to be treasured. It is absolutely worthless. And, you see, a man without God is worthless. A man without God may think that he's good, but in God's sight, he is good-for-nothing. And, I want you to notice three things about this lost coin.

### **1. It Was Lost in Darkness**

Notice, first of all, that it was lost in darkness. Look in verse 8, if you will: *"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle"* (Luke 15:8). Now, that tells us that this old coin, whatever it was, was lost in darkness. And, every man that is lost is in darkness. You see, man has bought into his intellectual superiority—he worships at the shrine of his mind, but the Bible says that he's in darkness. John 3:19: *"And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, [but] men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

### **2. It Was Lost in Dirtiness**

But, not only was the coin lost in darkness; it was also lost in dirtiness. I want you to look again, if you will, in verse 8: *"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house"* (Luke 15:8). She's a sloppy housewife—wasn't she?—or she would have lost it. She sweeps the house; she's getting down there with a broom, and she's stirring up dust, because somewhere down there in that dirt is that coin. You see, every sinner that's lost is not only lost in darkness—he stumbles; he doesn't know where he's going—he's also lost in dirt.

Now, you say, "Well, that's not me. I'm very moral. I'm a very self-righteous person. Nothing dirty about me." Well, you'd better read what God says about you, dear friend, in Psalm 53, verses 2 and 3: *"God looked down fro heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy"* (Psalm 53:2–3). Now, who does that include when he says, "altogether"? I'll tell you who he's talking about. You won't know who he's talking about: go home and look in the mirror. *"They are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (Psalm 53:3). *Most of the people in America are egomaniacs strutting their way to Hell, thinking they're too good to be damned. The worst form of badness is human goodness that substitutes goodness for the new birth. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). That's what Jesus was saying.

### **3. It Was Lost in Disgrace**

And, here was a coin—it was lost in darkness. Here was a coin—it was lost in dirtiness. And, here was a coin—it was lost in disgrace. Now, let me tell you why I say that. Remember what Jesus said: here's a woman who has ten pieces of silver. Look in

verse 8 (Luke 15:8). Everybody knew what He was talking about when He said “ten pieces of silver.” You see, back in this time, when a woman was married to a man, he gave her what was called a “bandeaux”—that is, there were ten pieces of silver. Each piece of silver had a hole through the middle. And, those ten pieces of silver were strung on a beautiful ribbon, and on each of those pieces of silver was her husband’s name engraved. And, you’ve seen pictures of Middle Eastern women wearing this around their forehead with ten pieces of silver there on her forehead. This was the same thing as a wedding band is to us; it shows that she belonged to another man. And, she had her husband’s name engraved on her forehead. But, and oh, she would wear it when she would go into public, but if she had been unfaithful to her husband, do you know what she would do? They’d take one piece of silver right out of the middle and force her to wear that with one piece missing, a gap, and that one piece missing meant that she was a fallen woman, a disgraced woman, a woman out of favor. Now, you can see why she was searching so frantically to find it. She would be disgraced without it.

And, what does our Lord say? He is saying that when a man is without God, he needs God so much because he’s lost in dirtiness, he’s lost in darkness, he’s lost in disgrace. Do you know what the devil wants to do? He wants to make your life a disgrace to God. That’s what he wants to do. And, any person who is not saved is a disgrace to God’s grace.

### C. **The Wretchedness of Man Without God**

Now, Jesus is just explaining to these people why He keeps company with lost people: first of all, because of the weakness of man without God; secondly, because of the worthlessness of man without God; and then, thirdly, because of the wretchedness of man without God. For the Lord goes on to tell a third part of this parable, and it’s the parable of a lost son who is perfectly wretched. Look, if you will please, in Luke 15, verse 11: *“And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him”* (Luke 15:11–16). Now, let’s notice the three marks of the wretchedness of man without God.

## 1. Depression

The first mark is depression. Look in verse 14: *“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land”* (Luke 15:14). This boy came to his father, and he said, “Father, I know that when you die, you’re going to bequeath to me a portion of your estate. Now Father, I want mine now.” Do you know what he was saying to his father? “I wish you were dead. I want mine now. I want what you provided, but I want you to stay out of my life. I don’t want you; I just want yours.” “I want to eat God’s food. I want to walk on God’s earth. I want to breathe God’s air. I want the body that God has made, but I don’t want God.” Do you know any body like that? The world is full of them. And so, he takes what God has given, and he wastes it, and he squanders it, and he lives it for himself. But, it’s not long until pleasure turns to poverty. And, the Bible says here in verse 14 that *“he began to be in want”* (Luke 15:14). That is, the depression came. You see, sin is costly. Teenagers, listen to me, there is nothing more costly than sin.

Now, we sing a song that says,

It pays to serve Jesus.

It pays every day.

It pays every step of the way (Frank C. Huston).

I want you to know that it costs to serve Satan. It costs every day. It costs every step of the way. It will cost you character. It will cost you influence. It will cost you reputation. It will cost you time. It will cost you health. It will cost you love. It will cost you home; it will cost you money. It will cost you your soul; it will cost you Heaven itself. Sin is costly. That’s what Jesus is saying when He says, *“He...spent all”* (Luke 15:14). All right, first of all, there was depression.

## 2. Degradation

And then, I want you to see, secondly, degradation. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *“And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine”* (Luke 15:15). Now remember, this was a Jewish boy. No self-respecting Jew of that time would have touched a hog with a ten-foot pole. And, there he is in the hog pen, living with him, feeding the swine, meant to be a servant of God, now, a slave of Satan. Today, when men go down, they go to the dogs. But, back in that day, they went to hogs. Now, he just...he was meant to be in his father’s house; and now, he’s just a friend of the filthy grunting hogs. You know a man by the company he keeps.

## 3. Desire

He’s in darkness, in degradation, and desire. I want you to notice in verse 16: *“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him”* (Luke 15:16). Oh listen, dear friend, the worst part is that he’s still hungry;

there's a vacuum within him. You see, the things of this world can't satisfy, and the husks of the swine can never satisfy the hungers of the soul. You see, these people around here in these discos and in these nightclubs are feeding on husks the swine did eat. And, they're empty, and they're hungry. And, there is something within them that longs to be satisfied, and they think they can find it in the hog pen.

Now, they said to Jesus, "Why do You keep company with sinners?" And, Jesus said, in effect, "I'll tell you why: because of the weakness of man without God, he's like a lost sheep. Because of the worthlessness of man, without God, he's like a lost coin. And, because of this wretchedness, without God, he's like a lost son."

## **II. The Nature of God**

But then, not only did Jesus say something about the nature of God—that man without God is incomplete. Now, I say it reverently—that God without man is in a sense incomplete. Now, don't get me wrong. Nothing can be added to God; nothing can be taken from God. And yet, I think we could say that when God made us, it was because He was lonely. And, God said, "I'm going to make someone in My image, someone like Me, someone that I can love and someone that can love Me." What good is there in being a lover if there's no one to love? And, the nature of God is that God is love and God loves you, my friends, today. Oh, I want you to hear this. So, Jesus is not only telling us something of the nature of man, but He's also telling us something of the nature of God.

### **A. A Shepherd to Lift Us**

And, He's saying that God is like a Savior to lift us, and that's the picture of the Good Shepherd. For the Bible says in Luke 19, verse 10: "*the Son of man [has] come to seek and to save that which [is] lost*" (Luke 19:10).

There were ninety and nine that safely lay  
In the shelter of the fold.  
But one was out on the hills away,  
Far off from the gates of gold,  
Away on the mountains wild and bare,  
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

“Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;  
Are they not enough for thee?”  
But the Shepherd made answer: “This of Mine  
Has wandered away from Me;  
And although the [path] be rough and steep,  
I go to the desert to find my sheep,  
I go to the desert to find my sheep.  
“Lord, whence are those blood [marks] all the way  
That mark out the mountain’s track?”  
“They were shed for one who had gone astray  
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.”  
“Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?”  
“They are pierced tonight by many a thorn;  
They are pierced tonight by many a thorn.”  
And all through the mountains, thunder riven  
And up through the rocky steep,  
There arose a glad cry to the gate of Heaven,  
“Rejoice! I have found my sheep!”  
And the angels echoed around the throne,  
“Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!  
Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!” (Elizabeth C. Clephane).

Let me ask you a question: Why did the Lord Jesus Christ leave the glories of Heaven and come to dirty little Bethlehem? Why did the Lord of Glory leave the golden streets of Heaven and walk the shores of Galilee? Why did the Lord Jesus Christ lay aside His gold and scepter for a wilted reed? Why did the Lord Jesus leave His magnificent throne to ride upon a lowly jackass? Why did Jesus lay aside His crown of diadems to be crowned with thorns? I’ll tell you why: because He loved us—that’s why. And, He’s *“come to seek and save that which [is] lost”* (Luke 19:10). And so, what is the nature of God? He’s like a shepherd to lift us.

### **B. A Spirit to Lead Us**

But, not only the nature of God is that there’s a shepherd to lift us; there’s a Spirit to lead us. I want you to notice in the next verse. Look again, if you will, in Luke 15, verse 8: *“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house”* (Luke 15:8). Oh, what a marvelous picture here not only of God the Son, but of God the Spirit! Do you know what the broom stands for? It stands for conviction. Do you know what she was using that broom for? To stir things up. Oh,

I've seen the Holy Spirit do that so many times as He stirs up the dirt in a heart, as He convicts us of sin. And, what is the light for? To reveal things that are otherwise hidden. Oh, you see, it's the Holy Spirit of God who disturbs our hearts. It's the Holy Spirit of God that shines the light of this world into our heart. And, you see, God is like a shepherd, and God is like the Holy Spirit who reveals our condition and who disturbs our hearts.

I've seen the Holy Spirit do that so many times. I remember when He did it in my heart as a teenage boy. I was sometimes so miserable I would get on my bicycle, and ride out into the woods, and sit down and cry. Just teenage boy, mean, street fighter, dishonest, disrespectful to his parents, cheating in school, skipping school, miserable—go out, and sit down, and just cry, not knowing what was wrong, not knowing where to find help. But, there was something wrong inside; it was God's Holy Spirit with a broom, just sweeping—God's Holy Spirit with a light just revealing—that Adrian Rogers was like a coin that was lost; he was worthless. And, bless God, if He hadn't saved me, I'd still be worthless; I wouldn't be worth anything to any body. I am so grateful that there's a Savior. I'm so grateful there's a Spirit to like me, a Spirit to lead us.

Dr. R.A. Torrey, a great preacher, was traveling through this countryside, and one time he stopped in. A little family asked the proprietor, "Would it be all right if we had family devotion?" since it was more of a family hotel like a little inn. And, the proprietor said, "All right." And, Dr. Torrey gathered everybody together there—he was a great man of God—and they had Bible study. But, after it was over, Dr. Torrey, just on a spiritual hunch, looked at that man and said, "Was everyone here?" "Well," he said, "almost everyone." He said, "There's a little maid in the kitchen. They call her a 'scullery maid'"—that is, she did the pot and pans—"and she said she couldn't come in because she was so dirty from doing the pots and pans." She just wouldn't come in. Dr. Torrey went back in the kitchen, and sat down by her, and looked at her, and said, "Daughter, are you a Christian?" And, she just bowed her head and started to weep. And, he said, "Do you want to be a Christian?" And, she said, "I don't know how." And, this is what Dr. Torrey felt like he needed to tell her to do: Dr. Torrey said, "Daughter, would you take this book, and begin to read it, and say, as you read it, 'Lord, show me'?" She said, "I will." Torrey went on his way.

A few months later he came back, and the proprietor of that hotel said, "What did you do to that young lady?" He said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Ever since you were here, she's been moaning and crying. She will hardly eat. She's losing weight. She looks haggard." Dr. Torrey went in to see her, and he said, "Daughter, tell me what's happened." "Oh," she said, "you told me to read the Bible and say, 'Lord, show me myself,' and," she said, "I've been reading the Bible over and over, and God has shown

me what a wretched sinner I am. God has shown me that I'm lost, and God has shown me that I'm doomed for Hell." Dr. Torrey said, "Now, little lady, I want you to continue to read the New Testament; but this time, as you continue to read, I want you to pray before you read, 'Lord, show me Thyself'—'Lord, show me Thyself.'"

Later, three years later, Dr. Torrey was in that vicinity. When he preached, a well-dressed, beautiful, cultured, elegant lady came up to him, and took his hand, and said, "Dr. Torrey, do you remember me?" And, he said, "No, little lady. I don't remember you." And, she said, "I was the scullery maid. I was the one that you said, 'Read the Bible and say, 'God, show me myself.' God showed me what a sinner I was. But then, I read, and I said, 'Lord, show me Thyself,' and He showed Himself to me gracious. He showed to me that He was infinite love. He showed that He died for my sins, that I have repented, and I have trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior." Who was the One who was superintending that reading? There's the Holy Spirit.

### C. **A Father to Love Us**

Oh, listen, listen, listen: there is a Savior to lift us; there is a Spirit to lead us, and there's one other thing about the nature of God: there's a Father to love us—a Father to love us. Jesus is trying to teach us something of the nature of God, and He's saying that not only is God God the Savior, and not only is God God the Spirit, but God is God the Father, who loves us. I have four children, and I would gladly lie down and die for any of my children. But oh, the Bible says, "*When my father and my mother [cast me off], then the LORD will take me up*" (Psalm 27:10). Oh, how He loves you and me! Oh, how God loves you! Can't you see the picture? Here's this prodigal son who said to his father, in effect, "I wish you were dead," and yet the father continues to love.

Can't you see the old man and the old women, as they're sitting there on the front porch of that house and they're waiting, they're looking down the road. They don't talk as much as they used to; they're getting older now. She says, "Dad, was there any mail today?" He says, "No, Mother, there was no mail." Another day goes, another—but you remember the story; something very wonderful is about to happen.

I want to go back to Luke chapter 15, if you will here, and notice what happen in verse 17: "*And when he came to himself, [this prodigal son] said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight,*

*and am no more worthy to be called thy son*”—he had a little speech, but it gets interrupted right here. He doesn’t even get to finish it—“*[And] the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his [finger], and [put] shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry*” (Luke 15:17–24).

Oh, we’ve got a Father to love us! That Father is sitting on the front porch. He looks down the road. He’s looked down that road so many times. He sees a familiar figure: there’s something about the way he swings his arms; there’s something about the way he turns his head when he walks. That Father knew who it was. “It’s John!” He says. “It’s John! Ma, it’s John!” He jumps off the front porch. He gathers up his robe. He begins to run down the road. People, this is the only picture in the Bible you will ever find of Almighty God in a hurry—the only one, the only one. Here, God is running. For every step you take to God, He’ll take two towards you.

I want to tell you, there’s a Father who loves us. That’s the nature of God. You may not understand it; you may not know it—but God loves you. He loves you this morning with an infinite love. I can see the old man as he says, “Ma, fix a meal.” I’ll guarantee you she didn’t fix a ham sandwich after that prodigal had been down there in the pigpen. “No, Ma, fix a meal.” “What are we going to have?” He says, “Let’s kill the fatted calf. I want you to fix the best. Put a robe on his back.” We get a robe of righteousness. “Put a ring on his finger.” That represents son-ship. “Put shoes on his feet.” That represents comfort. “This, my son, is coming home.” Aren’t you glad that old prodigal boy didn’t wait to clean up to come home? He never would have come home.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,  
Lost and ruined by the Fall;  
If you tarry till you’re better,  
You will never come at all. . . .

Let not conscience make you linger,  
Not a fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness He requireth  
Is to feel your need of Him (Joseph Hart).

## Conclusion

This is homecoming day, dear friend! And, I don’t know of a better scripture in all of the Bible that speaks of homecoming than this one. And, if you don’t know the Lord Jesus, listen to me. Now listen, don’t gather anything just yet. Just listen to me now, and I’m

finished. If you don't know Jesus, let me tell you what Luke 15 is saying. Are you listening? Here's what it's saying—the whole chapter: softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling, calling, "Oh sinner, come home. You need God." And, God wants you—He really does.

Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Father in Heaven, we bless Your holy name. We praise You today, and we worship You, dear Lord, in the beauty of holiness. And, we pray, dear God, for those in this service who are lost and without Christ, that even today they will come home, that they'll be saved. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

# Jesus, the Friend of Sinners

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 4, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15:1–32**

*“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.”*

LUKE 15:1

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

And I can tell you, it's a joy to be back today. And would you take God's Word and find a familiar passage, Luke chapter 15. We're going to look at a passage that God laid on my heart when I was in Israel to share with you today, as I traveled in that wonderful land, the land of shepherds and sheep and many things that we're going to study in this fifteenth chapter of the gospel of Luke.

As you're finding it, let me tell you a story. It is a true story. Robert Robinson was born in England in the 19th Century. He came to Christ under the ministry of an evangelist named George Whitfield, who was a mighty man of God. Robert Robinson was highly gifted and felt God calling him to the ministry. And as he ministered and as

he preached, his star rose and rose. He was gifted in many ways. But, alas, it breaks my heart to say it, Robert Robinson fell into immorality. He fell into sin and his star faded just as quickly as it rose. He left the ministry. He was riding, one day, on a stagecoach, and sitting by a lady, a stranger he did not know. And she was reading. And she was reading a passage in a book. And, she turned to him and said, "Sir, I'm reading some very interesting lines. I'd like to know what you think about them. Perhaps we could discuss them together. Perhaps you could share with me your thoughts." And here's what she read to him, a song, I believe, you sang last Sunday, Jim. "Come, Thou Fount of Every blessing, Tune my heart to sing thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise." She said, "Sir, what do you think about that?" He looked away. He tried to change the subject, but she brought it back again and read it again to him, and said, "Sir, what do you think about those lines?" He hung his head and said, "Madam, I am the poor miserable creature who wrote those lines." Robin Robinson had written that song.

Perhaps, almost as prophecy, he wrote another part of that great song that prophesied his failure and his departure from the things of God. Another line in that same song, really, "Prone to wander—Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart, Oh take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above." Prone to wander.

I want to ask you a question: Was there a time in your life when you were closer to God than you are at this very moment? Now, don't answer it out loud, but answer. Was there a time when Jesus Christ was more real to you? He was a bright, living reality to you, and today you're going through the motions. Was there a time when God was more real to you than He is right now?

Secondly, do you have a desire now to be back where you were? Do you? Or, perhaps, are you so eaten up with guilt that the devil has told you there's no way back for you, that God is finished with you?

Well, I have wonderful news for you. There is a way back. And that's what the fifteenth chapter of the gospel of Luke is talking about. It is speaking of Jesus, who is the friend of sinners. And don't you ever let the devil tell you that if you've gotten away from God, there is no hope for you. It's too late. You cannot come back.

You can come back. And today I want to talk to you about Jesus, the friend of sinners, because that's what this chapter is all about. As a matter of fact, if you would really like to take stock as to whether or not you are close to God or far away from God, the great preacher of yesteryear, A. W. Tozer has given some magnificent questions. And I want you to think about these questions this morning, and just take inventory before we look in the Word of God and think about Jesus, the friend of sinners. Would you like, to answer these questions? Be honest. Don't give the answers that you think you ought to give or that others would expect you to give, because nobody knows what

answers you're going to give, but let's take a little test. I think these are good questions.

Question number one. What do you want most in life? That's a great question, isn't it? What do you want most in life? Have you thought about it?

Number two. What do you think about most often? Are you thinking? What do you think about most often?

Number three. As you look at your checkbook, or analyze your budget, what items account for your greatest expenditure? What consumes the most of your resources? Have you thought about it?

Next, as you look at your life, not only your bankbook, but as you look at your calendar, what events, practice, whatever occupy the most of your time? What two activities consume the most of your time? Good question to analyze who we are.

Next, here's an interesting question that Dr. Tozer asks. If you could spend one day being anybody else in the world that you could be, who would you want to be? Being anybody else, who would you want to be? Why?

Are you thinking? All right. In the past week, how much time, literally, actually have you spent in Bible study and prayer? This past week. Be honest. How much time have you spent literally in Bible study and prayer?

Next, as you look back on your spiritual life, when was it that you felt closest to God in all of your history? When was it that you felt furthest away from Him? Where are you right now?

Well, those are interesting questions. Jesus gave us the fifteenth chapter of Luke in the midst of criticism. They were criticizing Jesus. And I'll tell you what they were criticizing Him for. They were criticizing Jesus for being a friend to sinners. Luke, chapter 15, verse 1: "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." Now the Publicans were the tax collectors. They, they had sold out to Rome, and Rome was the occupational force, and the Publicans were often dishonest and, they were, of all men, hated in the land of Israel. But they came to hear Jesus. Publicans and sinners were almost one word in that day. "...the Publicans and sinners for to hear him." To hear Jesus. "And the Pharisees and scribes—now, contrariwise, the Pharisees and the scribes were the religious leaders of that day—murmured, saying, This man—that is, Jesus—this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

Now, they were criticizing Jesus. And what they criticized Jesus for was keeping company with sinners. And, by the way, it doesn't take much size to criticize. Some people think that's their spiritual gift. A pastor said in church one Sunday, "Brother Jones, would you stand and lead us in a word of criticism?" Some people think that is their gift. It doesn't take much size to criticize. They were criticizing Jesus for being a friend to sinners. And with that in mind, Jesus gave a parable. Now, some say three parables, but that isn't what the Scripture says. "He spake this parable unto them..."

This parable has three parts to it. Jesus, in this parable, spoke of three lost things; lost sheep, a lost, lost silver, and a lost son. There are three parts to one great big parable. Not three parables, but one parable. But in this parable, these three parts to this parable, Jesus gives us some wonderful lessons.

## **I. The Sinful Condition of Mankind**

Number one. What Jesus shows is the sinful condition of mankind—the sinful condition of mankind. And He compares mankind to the lost sheep, the silver, and the lost son.

### **A. The Lost Sheep: The Weakness of Man Without God**

Now, the lost sheep pictures the weakness of man without God. You know, it's not a compliment to be called a sheep. Look, if you will, in verse 4: "And what man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And, when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. And I say unto you that likewise there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

Now, He was talking to people who understood sheep and shepherds. And while we were in Israel, we saw some sheep and some shepherds. And, most of us have a very romantic idea, sentimental idea about sheep, but I want to tell you, it's not a compliment to be called a sheep. As a matter of fact, sheep are very weak. The lost sheep pictures the weakness of man without God.

#### **1. Sheep Are Dumb**

For example, a sheep is a dumb animal. Hello. A sheep is a dumb animal. That's the reason the Bible says, "All we like sheep have gone astray..." You see horses. They can perform. You see, dogs can do tricks. You see other animals that can be trained. Even fleas sometimes can be trained, literally. Has anybody ever seen a trained sheep? Do you ever go to the circus and see the sheep go through their routine? No. You all, the sheep, they're not brilliant. A sheep is a dumb animal. That's the reason the Bible describes us like sheep. "There's none that understandeth, no not one."

I heard about a man who was playing checkers with a dog in front of a country store. The man would move, the dog would move, the man would move, the dog would move. Somebody said, "That is a brilliant dog." He said, "Oh, I don't know. I beat him two out of three games."

You can train animals. You just can't train a sheep. "And all we like sheep have gone astray..." And so, the Lord is saying, "Why do I keep company with these people?"

They're like sheep, they're like sheep." And, you may have a Ph.D. today, but spiritually you may be like a sheep.

## **2. Sheep Are Dependent**

Nicodemus was a ruler in Israel. Jesus said in John, chapter 3, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" He had his M.I., Master of Israel, but he didn't have his B.A. He wasn't born again. "Art thou a master in Israel, and you don't know these things." You may teach over here at the university, but spiritually, without Jesus Christ, you, my friend, are like a sheep. A sheep is dumb. A sheep is dependent. A sheep without a shepherd is very dependent.

A sheep can get lost. He can get, turned upside down and not even be able to get himself right side up. We call that a cast sheep. And a sheep is dumb, dependent; so are we. Without Him, we are lost.

## **3. Sheep Are Defenseless**

And a sheep is defenseless. A sheep can't defend himself, herself. A dog can bite, cat can scratch, a horse can kick, and a skunk, we know what it can do. But what can a sheep do? A sheep is ready for the slaughter. A sheep is one of the most defenseless animals on this earth. And, and Jesus gives an answer as to why He kept company with sinners—because they are like sheep. The weakness of man without God.

### **B. The Lost Coin: The Worthlessness of Man Without God**

But then, Jesus gives another story here that speaks not only of the weakness of man without God, but the lost silver. It pictures the worthlessness of man without God. Look, if you will, as we continue to read here in verse 8: "Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece that was lost, that I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Again, Jesus is giving a parable; this time not a lost sheep, but lost silver, a lost coin. You see, the lost sheep speaks of the weakness of man without God, the lost coin speaks of the worthlessness of man without God. If you were to take a very valuable gold piece and one red cent, and both of them are lost; theoretically, one is of no more value than the other if it's lost. It can't be treasured and it cannot be spent. It is unprofitable. That's the reason the Bible describes us in Romans 3, verse 12: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable..." Now, God created you. God made you that you might be the sheep in His fold, and that you might be the coin in His treasure.

#### **4. It Was Lost in the Darkness**

But this coin was lost. And how was it lost? Look in verse 8. It was lost in the darkness. The Bible says if she lose a piece of silver, she lights a candle. Obviously, it was dark. And that's the way people today are lost. They're lost in the darkness. John chapter 3, verse 19, says, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." And there's so many in the world today who are in darkness, and we're going to talk more about that candle later on, because that candle represents the illumination of the Holy Spirit of God to help us to find that lost coin.

Did you know there are people who will not come to church this morning because they don't want to hear the Word of God? Do you know why they don't want to hear the Word of God? They hate the light and they will not come to the light because their deeds are evil. Sometimes we smile at a child that's afraid of the dark. I think more ridiculous is a man afraid of the light, women who are afraid of light.

#### **5. It Was Lost in the Dirtiness**

Here was a coin. It's unprofitable. It's lost in darkness and it's lost in dirtiness. Look, if you will, again in verse 8. The Bible says she lights a candle, and she sweeps the house. Down there in the dust, down there in the dirt, is that coin. And she, with her candle and her broom, is looking for the coin. What a masterful teacher was the Lord Jesus to tell us again the condition of a man, a woman, a boy or girl without God lost in the darkness, lost in the dirtiness, and lost in disgrace.

#### **6. It Was Lost in Disgrace**

The Bible says if a woman has ten coins, and she loses one of them. In Middle East, when a woman was married, betrothed to a man, many times he would give her ten pieces of silver. These pieces of silver would have a hole in the middle and you could thread them on a ribbon. And she would tie that ribbon around her head, and those beautiful coins would be there on her forehead. You've seen pictures of this. Many times with these women with these ten coins across her forehead, very much like an engagement ring, very much like a wedding ring. Ten is the number of completeness. And she's wearing these. But if she were unfaithful to her husband, they would take a coin out and there would be an ugly gap there to show her unfaithfulness. She is disgraced.

And here is a coin, lost in the dark, lost in the dirt, and lost in disgrace. No wonder she's lighting a candle. No wonder she's sweeping to get that coin back in its place, because though she herself is not guilty, she is looked upon with disgrace.

And do you know what the devil wants to do? He wants to make your life a disgrace to the Almighty. And, it's not just simply what your sin is doing to you; it's what your sin

is doing to Jesus Christ and to the very reputation of God.

Why does Jesus keep company with these people? Number one, they're weak like a sheep. Number two, they're worthless like a lost coin. Not worthless, in and of itself, but worthless as long as it is lost, out of place.

### **C. The Lost Son: The Wilfulness of Man Without God**

And then Jesus goes on to give the third part of this story. And, and look, if you will, now, beginning, in verse 11: "And he said, A certain man had two sons; And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his fields to feed swine, and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. And no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father and will say until him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no more worthy to be called thine son. Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father, but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, and the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servant, bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. And they began to be merry."

Here's the third episode in this parable. Not only, lost sheep; not only lost silver, but now a lost son. So many of us know the story of this lost son. He says, "Father, you know that, when you die, I have an inheritance coming. But I don't want to wait till you die. Give it to me now." When he said that, it broke his father's heart. It was a way of saying I wish you were dead. I don't want you; I want what you have. And there are many people who want the blessings of God; they don't want the Blessor. They don't want fellowship with God. They want God out of their life. They want the goods of this world. A brokenhearted father divides, between his two sons, the inheritance. The younger son takes his inheritance and he goes to the far country. Now, I don't know where he went, but he went to some swinging city, where there was wine, woman, and song. And he began to spend his money until it was dissipated and it was gone.

## **7. A Life of Depression**

Again, I want you to see the picture. We've talked about the lost sheep; dumb, dependent, defenseless. We've talked about the lost coin; lost in the dirt, lost in the dark, lost in disgrace. And now, Jesus, the master teacher, gives another picture of what it means to be away from God. It's a life of depression. Look in verse 14. He had spent all. You see, sin is costly. We sing, "It pays to serve Jesus, it pays everyday." I tell you, it cost to serve Satan, it cost everyday. He is economically depressed. It is gone. You say, "Well, that's not me, Adrian. I've got a lot in the money, I mean, a lot of money in the bank. I may not be living for God, but I'm pretty well healed." My dear friend, may I tell you there's more than one kind of poverty. Revelation, chapter 3, verse 17 speaks of that church at Laodicea, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The poorest man in the world is the man who has plenty in his purse and nothing in his person. He doesn't know the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is costly. It costs your character, your influence, your reputation, your time, your health, your love, your home, your money, your soul, heaven itself. It cost to serve Satan. It was a life of depression.

## **8. A Life of Degradation**

But, not only was it a life of depression, it was a life of degradation. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country—Now, this is Jesus is talking to Jews. He goes now to a Gentile—a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." Now, if you don't know anything about the Bible, this may not ring a bell with you. But I'm telling you that the, the dietary law of the Bible completely separates the Jew from swine, from swine's flesh, from pigs. This, this was as low as a person could get. A self-respecting Jew would not touch a hog with a ten foot pole. And now he's down there in the hog pen, feeding the swine. It's a life of depression. It's a life of degradation.

Now, this youngster, when he left home, doubtless, would have thought, I'll never go that far. I'll never go that far down. But he did go that far down and he is now in degradation. And, you may be surprised how far Satan will take you. I've talked to people who've been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, would never dream that they could reach the depth, the depravity that they're in because they're away from God. Today, we talk about people going to the dogs; in that day they went to the hogs. Same thing.

## **9. A Life of Dissatisfaction**

A life of depression. A life of degradation. And a life of dissatisfaction. Look in verse 16: "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no

man gave unto him.” Oh, the emptiness of a life without God. If you’re away from God, there’s nothing that will satisfy that longing of your heart. Jesus is taking physical hunger here, this is a parable, and making it an illustration of that deeper hunger that is in every man’s heart. That’s the reason why I ask you, was there a time when you were closer to God than you are now? Do you have a desire to come home? Is there a gnawing hunger?

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
what the heart yearns for, by sin undermined.*

*I have the secret, I know where ’tis found.*

*Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

Here was a man with a hunger and if you’re a true child of God and away from God, you’ve got that hunger in your heart today.

Now, this is the picture that Jesus gave. He gave a picture of sheep who are stupidly lost. He gave a picture of a lost coin, carelessly lost. He gave a picture of a lost son, willfully lost, away from God. And whether you are ignorantly away from God, whether or not you are carelessly away from God, whether or not you are willfully away from God, this fifteenth chapter of the gospel of Luke is a wonderful story for you.

## **II. The Saving Compassion of God**

Now, let’s just take it and flip it. We have talked about the sinful condition of man, but let’s talk about the saving compassion of God, the saving compassion of God. You’re going to understand why this chapter is such a great chapter, because our Lord now is putting in stark contrast the depravity of man and the great loving heart of Almighty God. And what you have here pictured is God the Son, God the Spirit, and God the Father.

### **A. The Lost Sheep: Redeeming Nature of God the Son**

For example, look, if you will, in the story of the lost sheep. Look in verse 4 again, if you will. “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” Who is that a picture of? Friend, that is a picture of the redeeming nature of God the Son. Jesus is the good shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. Jesus said of Himself in Luke 19, a few chapters later, verse 10: “For the Son of man—that’s the way he described Himself—For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” This shepherd that you find there in verse 4 is Jesus Christ Himself.

Why did Jesus leave the glories of heaven and come to Bethlehem? Why did Jesus walk the dusty shores of Galilee when He could have been walking on streets of gold? Why did Jesus exchange His scepter in heaven for a wilted reed? Why did Jesus lay aside His glorious diadem for a crown of thorns? Why did Jesus settle the dust in

Gethsemane with His own blood? Why did Jesus stand silent in Pilate's judgment hall while they scourged Him? Why did Jesus die in agony and blood upon the cross? I'll tell you why. It is the redeeming nature of God the Son. He came to seek and to save you, precious friend, lost sheep. Sheep—dumb, defenseless, dependent. He is the good shepherd, and He sent me here today to tell you something, that He loves you. And it doesn't matter what you've done, He loves you. And if you come to Him today, I can tell you there will be rejoicing in the presence of the angels. Don't get the idea it's the angels that rejoice. It is Jesus who rejoices in the presence of the angels because He's found His sheep. His sheep have come home. There is the redeeming nature of God the Son.

### **B. The Lost Coin: Revealing Nature of God the Spirit**

And then, secondly, there is the revealing nature of God the Spirit. Continue to read here about now the, the lost silver. And look, if you will, in this same story and Luke chapter 15, verse 8: "Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?" That, my friend, is a picture of the Holy Spirit. There's a candle and a broom, a candle and a broom. What is the candle? The candle is light, the illumination of the Spirit of God. Before I preached this morning, I got on my knees and I prayed, "O God, help me to preach. And, O God, help them to understand," because it is the Holy Spirit of God that illumines, that gives light. He is the divine illumination.

Not only is He the divine illuminator, He is the divine disturber. He is the broom. He is the one who sweeps and stirs in that dirt and in that mire. You know, so many people come to church on Sunday. They're not illumined and they're not disturbed. I don't want anybody to go out of here undisturbed if there's sin in your heart. And you say, "I came to church to be made comfortable." Well, we're not all that user-friendly around here. I pray God the Holy Spirit will take that broom and stir and sweep in your heart until you are convicted of sin and the dirt and the mire, because the Holy Spirit of God is given there for divine illumination and divine disturbance. Oh, and so many churches, we're trying to placate people and make them feel good. There's so much social service going on in the world today that doesn't deal with sin, and all people are doing is making the world a better place to go to hell from. We need the work of the Holy Spirit.

There is the redeeming nature of God the Son. He's the shepherd seeking the sheep. There's the revealing nature of God the Spirit. He is the light. He is the disturbance to say there's something wrong.

### **C. The Lost Son: Receiving Nature of God the Father**

Thirdly, there's the receiving nature of God the Father. The redeeming nature of God the Son. The revealing nature of God the Spirit. And the receiving nature of God the

Father. Look, if you will, in verses, 16 and following. The Bible says, concerning this boy down in the hog pen, “And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” What is that a picture of? It’s a picture of God the Father.

Now, here’s this prodigal. He’s down in the hog pen, and he says, “I ought not to be here. I need to come home.” I wonder what questions he had in his mind. Will my father accept me if I go back home? If I do go back home, and he accepts me, will my father accept me as a slave or will he receive me as a son? Now, if I go back home, what about the inheritance? Have I lost any further inheritance forever, or will my father give me yet more? Well, let’s imagine him going home. Let’s just imagine. It didn’t happen this way, but let’s imagine it happened this way.

He goes home. He tries to open the front door. The door is locked. He knocks on the door. No one comes. He’s seen a light inside. He knows somebody’s home. He knocks on the door again. After a while, his mother comes to the door. She opens the door and she says, “Well, son, hello.” “Well, mother, mother, can I come in?” Well, she says, “Well, son, I don’t know. I’ll need to confer with your father.” “Well, mother, would you go tell him I’m, I’m here? Would you go tell dad that I’ve come home?” She says, “Well, son, he’s very angry. I don’t know that he will want to see you right now. Maybe this is not a good time.” “Well, mom, could you just go tell him I’m here? Tell him that his younger son has come home.” She goes and she stays a very long time, and then she comes back and says, “Son, I don’t know how to tell you this, but your father says he no longer has a younger son. I’m sorry, Son. Good day.” And she shuts the door. Aren’t you glad it didn’t happen that way? No.

Oh, let me tell you how it happened. The Bible says, “...when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion upon him, and ran to meet him...” This is a picture of God Almighty. Now, friend, in the Bible when God is pictured, God is pictured as majesty, never in a hurry, never late. But this is a time He’s pictured in a hurry. He gathers up his old robe and begins to run down to meet that boy while he was yet a great way off. He ran, he ran to meet this wayward son, fell on his neck, hugged him, kissed him, squeezed him. “Dad, dad, dad. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son. But, dad, I want to come home. Dad, would you just make me a servant. Lord, let me sleep out back. Let me work in the fields. Can I come home, dad?” His dad says, “Servants, bring a robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand. Put shoes on his feet.

And, mother, you fix the best meal you have ever fixed. This my son has come home again.” Friend, that’s the heart of Almighty God.

And if you’re away from God, weak like a sheep, worthless like a lost coin, wrecked like a lost son, I’ve got wonderful, wonderful news for you. The door’s wide open and He says, “Come home.”

That’s why our Heavenly Father keeps company with sinners. That’s why Jesus came. That’s why He suffered, bled, and died.

The older brother, he was at home. He’d never left home. The older brother was self-righteous. He was quite angry when the father killed the fatted calf and he said, “Look. All this time I’ve served you. You never killed a fatted calf for me.” And the father said, “But your brother has come home. Come on in. Let’s celebrate. Let’s have a party.” But the older brother, the one who had stayed home, the one who had lived a good life, wouldn’t come in.

And do you know how the story ends? With the younger brother on the inside and the older brother on the outside.

## **Conclusion**

Now, when I’ve been talking today about lost sheep and lost silver and lost son, you say, “That’s not me. I’m a pretty good guy.” You know who Jesus was really speaking to in this story? He was talking to the Pharisees who felt they didn’t need to be saved.

I’m going to close this message, and I’m going to tell you something, and I want you to listen to it. This parable teaches two things. Number one, there’s no one so bad they cannot be saved; and number two, there’s no one so good they need not be saved. That’s what it teaches. Whether you are that lost son coming home, or whether you’re that elder brother in self righteousness; either one, there is room in the family for you.

God want to do something wonderful in your life today. I told someone this morning, “I almost wish I were lost so I could get saved all over again.” To be saved! To know Jesus! Oh, today, today, I want you to do something wonderful, something you’ll be everlastingly glad you do, did when you stand in the presence of God. I want you, like a child, just to give your heart to Jesus. Say, “Lord Jesus. Thank You for loving me. Thank You for dying for me. Thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. And now, Lord Jesus, come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus.” And I promise you He will.

We’re going to sing an invitational hymn, and I’m going to ask the ministers of this church to stand at the head of each of these aisles. And for those of you who’re in the balcony, I’m going to ask a minister to stand under that banner that says Redeemer there, or that banner over there in the balcony that says Messiah. And then, as we sing, all of those of you who today, once and for all, now and forever, will say, “I am giving my

heart to Jesus,” I want you to come forward. Say, “Pastor, I’ve never done that before. I don’t know what to do.” Don’t worry about it. Listen. You just come and say to this minister, “I’m trusting Jesus.” We’ll rejoice. We’ll give you some Scripture to stand on. We’ll take a Bible and guide you in this decision. And you, today, can give your heart to Christ, be everlastingly saved, and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you. And not only will He save you; He’ll keep you saved.

Now, others of you today need a church home. And if you are without a church home and you know that you’re saved, but you need a church home, I want you to come forward and I want you to say to a minister, “I want to place my membership here.” If you’re not had believers’ baptism, as we understand it, we’d want the joy of baptizing you as a believer in Christ. As a matter of fact, I’d like for those of you who are already saved and need a church home, to lead the way for these who are coming to give their heart to Jesus. You be the first one down here.

Number three. If you are saved and a member of this church, and yet you’ve just been away from God, you need to come home, too. Not in order to be saved, you just need to come back to fellowship with God. Maybe you’d just like to come here and say to one of these people, “Would you just kneel and pray for me?” And we’ll kneel and pray for you and you can go back to your seat. Or, maybe you’d just like to pray for yourself and go back to your seat. Nobody here but us. We’re not trying to put on a show. You just do what God lays on your heart. Remember, today, if you’re giving your heart to Jesus, just slip out and come down this aisle. And don’t put it off. The Bible says, “Today, if you hear God’s voice, don’t harden your heart.” This may be God’s final, public invitation to someone here today.

Let’s stand together as we sing. And on the first stanza, you step out and come.

# The Father's Heart

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 20, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15:1–32**

*“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”*

LUKE 15:20

## Outline

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- A. Man Is Weak Like a Lost Sheep
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  - 2. A Sheep Is Dependent
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- B. Man Is Worthless Like Lost Silver
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- C. Man Is Wretched Like a Lost Son
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Conclusion

## Introduction

The message today: “The Father's Heart.” There's no passage in all of the Bible that explains the heart of God the Father, therefore is a heart of instruction for every father, chapter fifteen—Luke chapter fifteen. I read the first three verses—Luke fifteen, one through three: “Then drew near unto Him all the tax collectors and sinners to hear him and the Pharisees and Scribes murmured saying, this man receiveth sinners and He eateth with them. And He spoke this parable unto them.”

Now, let me give you the setting. Jesus Christ would eat and drink with unsaved people. He loved them. He kept company with them because He wanted to bring them to Himself. He wanted them to receive forgiveness and redemption and salvation and freedom. But the Pharisees hated Jesus for this.

Now, you know who the Pharisees were. They were the religious crowd of that day, but they were so self-righteous. And in these Pharisees, the milk of human kindness had curdled, and so they criticized the Lord Jesus for receiving sinners and for eating with sinners. And by the way, it doesn't take much size to criticize. That's very easy to do.

And, every church has its critics. One little country church, a pastor stood up and said Brother Jones, would you please lead us in a word of criticism. Brother Jones was known for that. But Jesus is answering that criticism. Why does He keep company with sinners? I want you to know before I even get into this message very deeply. I am so grateful that He does. So grateful that He does, because if He didn't, He wouldn't have anything to do with me. Thank God for a Savior who receives sinners!

Now, Jesus gave a parable in answer to this criticism. Sometimes we say there are three parables because there's the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. There are all in this one chapter. Because they are all in this one chapter we say, there are three parables. But if you'll look carefully, it doesn't say that Jesus spoke parables to them. It says, He spoke a parable to them. This is one big parable. It deals with the father heart of God, the way that God looks at lost people, the way that God looks at sinners. And it is a parable of a lost sheep, lost silver, and a lost son. All of this makes one great big parable. And I want you to listen carefully because it tells how God looks at you, how God feels toward you, and therefore, how you ought to feel toward others, and how you look at others.

In the parable, we see basically two things. I want you to get it. First of all, we see the sinful nature of man. And secondly, we see the saving nature of God. Do you have it?

## **I. The Sinful Nature of Man**

Let's look as we look into this chapter and see first of all the story of the sinful nature of man. And, first of all, He deals with the sheep. Look with me in verses four through seven. "Jesus said, what man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it. And, when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And, when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, rejoice with me for I have found my sheep, which was lost. And, I say unto you that likewise, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety

and nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

### **A. Man Is Weak Like a Lost Sheep**

When Jesus here is speaking of the sheep, He's teaching us that the chief characteristic of the sheep is weakness. Weakness. A sheep is weak and that illustrates a man without God. Now, it's not much of a compliment to be called a sheep. We have sort of a overblown idea of sheep. Let me tell you three things about sheep.

#### **1. A Sheep Is Dumb**

Number one, a sheep is stupid. That's right. A sheep is stupid. A sheep is dumb. That's the reason the Bible says in Isaiah chapter fifty-three, all we like sheep have gone astray. If you've gone to the circus, you may have seen a trained elephant, trained lions and tigers, dogs and horses, but you've never seen a trained sheep. Think about it. You ever see a sheep doing tricks? You never will. Sheep are dumb. And, the Bible says, all we like sheep have gone astray. A sheep is so easily lost. The lost will return to the stall. The cows will come home. The dog can find his way home. Did you ever try to get rid of a cat? But a sheep, he'll nibble here. He'll browse there. He'll go over here and he just keeps going, because a sheep is dumb and so is man without God.

Now, I don't care if you're a Ph.D. It matters not if you are a rocket scientist, a philosopher, a scholar. The Bible says in Romans chapter three, concerning spiritual things, “there is none that understandeth”. Nicodemus was a brilliant man. He was a master in Israel. He had his M.I. He had his master's degree but he didn't have his B.A. He wasn't born again. And, Jesus said to him, Art thou a master in Israel and understandest not these things? When Jesus talked to him about being born again.

And, so you may be listening to me today. You may have a high IQ. You may be in the upper echelons of intellectual society. But listen to me today. You cannot think your way to God. You cannot think your way to God. There is none that understandeth, the Bible says, no not one. And, that's found in Romans chapter three and verse eleven. And so first of all, a sheep is dumb.

#### **2. A Sheep Is Dependent**

Second thing I want you to think about a sheep, a sheep is dependent. That's the reason sheep need a shepherd. Jesus said, He had compassion upon them because they were like a sheep without a shepherd. A sheep without a shepherd, therefore, is going to be destroyed and devoured because he is so dependent. In his book, a shepherd looks at the sheep. Keller tells about a sheep and a condition that a sheep would get in that the English shepherds would call a cast sheep.

What would happen is this: that after the sheep would browse, the sheep would lie down, perhaps in a crevice or a hollow place on the ground where there was a little depression. Maybe he would stretch his legs, and when he would, the center of gravity

would shift a little bit and he would roll slightly on his back. Trying to get up as he pawed, he would roll further on his back and there the sheep would not be able to get his legs back on the ground because a sheep does not have that much agility and the sheep would paw frantically in the air and sometimes bleat trying to get up, but he could not get his feet back on the ground. That is what they would call a cast sheep.

After a while, the gases would begin to build up in the abdominal cavity and circulation would be cut off to the legs and that sheep lying there would be an easy prey for vultures and for coyotes or for whatever predator would come along and the sheep would lie there and die and be devoured, unless the shepherd would come, count his sheep, see that one was missing, go out and find that sheep and put it back on its feet. And, so it is with me and so it is with you.

So, many times I've gotten myself into a position where I was totally helpless, had not the shepherd come and put me back on my feet. Isn't that right?

### **3. A Sheep Is Defenseless**

You see, a sheep is dumb. And, a sheep is dependent. I tell you a third thing about a sheep. Not only is a sheep dumb, and not only is a sheep dependent, but a sheep is defenseless. Defenseless. The sheep does not have the mechanism of defense.

A horse can run. A bear can crush. The tiger can slash. The skunk, we know what he can do. But what can a sheep do? A sheep is not built for fight nor flight. It can't run fast. It can hardly swim. A sheep is a defenseless animal.

I read sometime years ago of some tourists in the Scottish Highlands. There were up on a mountainside and one man had some binoculars and he was looking across the valley to another mountain. He said, look, he said to the guy. Is that sheep over there on that ledge? The guide said, yes it is. He said, How did it get there? He said, well, it's the nature of the sheep in this area. They come down the mountainside, browsing and grazing and they'll drop from one ledge to another, and then sometimes like this sheep they'll get on a ledge too narrow for them to turn around and they cannot make their way back up the mountain.

The tourist said, What will happen to that sheep? The guide said, the eagles will get him. If you'll stay and watch, you'll see. And, so they watched and after a while there came a formation of five eagles flying together with a lead eagle. And, they spotted that sheep there, that helpless sheep there on the mountainside and the lead eagle fell like a rock upon the head of that helpless sheep. The sheep went to his knees and stood up. Again, the eagles circled, and came down like a rock upon the head of the hapless sheep. By that time, the sheep was so frightened and so frustrated, it turned and tried to turn around and scramble up the mountainside. Of course, when it did, it fell from the narrow ledge and plummeted to the bottom of that gorge. Hundreds of feet below and was crushed and five eagles swept down and feasted on the body of that sheep. The

sheep was defenseless. I want to also that you and I are totally defenseless against Satan's eagles. Do we not have a shepherd and had we not a shepherd, we would be like that poor sheep, devoured by those eagles, and that's the reason the Lord Jesus said to these Pharisees, you want to tell you why I keep company with these people. You have criticized me for eating and for drinking with sinners. But I tell you why I do it. They're like sheep without a shepherd. And, Jesus here spoke of the weakness of man without God. But it tells of the worthlessness of man without God.

## **B. Man Is Worthless Like Lost Silver**

Look in the second story here in verse eight. "Either, what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth light a candle, or a lamp and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."

Now, here our Lord no longer speaking of the lost sheep, but He's talking of the lost silver. Not only the weakness of man without God, but the worthlessness of man without God. What good is a piece of silver, what good is a piece of money, if it's lost? It can't be spent and it cannot be treasured. It has become unprofitable.

And, not only does the Bible say that there's none that understandeth. The Bible also tells us in Romans chapter three and verse twelve, that without God we're unprofitable. Listen, they're all gone out of the way. That's the lost sheep. They're altogether become unprofitable. That's the lost silver. They've all gone out of the way. They have altogether become unprofitable. There is none that is good. No not one.

Now, why did God make you? Why did God create you? What is your purpose? It is to spend and be spent for Him or to be a treasure for Him, but you are not to be lost. And, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, you're like a coin that is lost, out of circulation. Not doing the things that you were meant to do and no good to your master.

Now, I want you to see how this coin was lost.

### **1. Lost in the Darkness**

First of all, it was lost in the darkness. Look in verse eight. In order to find the coin, the woman had to do what? She had to light a candle. She had to light a lamp and every man, every woman, every boy without Jesus Christ is lost in the darkness.

John chapter three verse nineteen, "And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil."

### **2. Lost in the Dirtiness**

But not only was it lost in the darkness; it was lost in the dirtiness. Not only did she light a lamp, but she took a broom and she began to sweep the house. What filth must have been on the floor for a woman to take a broom and have to sweep in order to find

a coin. What a sloppy housewife. Here's a woman. Here's a woman who has to sweep the floor in order to find a lost coin. Why? Because it was lost in the dark and it was lost in the dirt. And, again, that's a picture of these people that Jesus was keeping company with. That's also a picture of you.

Well, you say, no, Pastor Rogers, I don't live a dirty life. You say, yes, I'm a very fine person. I'm one of the best people in our neighborhood. I'm a member of the garden society. I'm a member of this club or that club. I'm a member of the lodge. I'm a member of the PTA. I pay my taxes. I give to the Red Cross. I'm a very fine person. Do you know what the Bible says about those things that you call fine? The Bible says, your righteousness is as what? Filthy rags, in the sight of God. Your righteousness—I'm not talking about your unrighteousness. I'm talking about the things that you count for righteousness are as filthy rags in the sight of God.

And, so you may think you're brilliant, but God says, spiritually, you're stupid. You may think that you are moral, but God says, spiritually, your righteousness is as filthy rags.

### **3. Lost in Disgrace**

This coin, lost in the dark, lost in the dirt, and it was lost in disgrace—in disgrace. Now, why did Jesus say...? Look again here in verse eight: One woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one. Why did Jesus say, ten pieces of silver? Ten in the Bible is what? The full number, the complete number. Seven the perfect number, but ten the complete number. Five and five—ten.

Now, when a woman got married in this day, rather than a wedding ring, she was given a band of, a string of ten coins. Each one of those coins had her husband's name on it. And, there was a ribbon that ran through the center of each coin. Because in each coin there was a hole and those coins were strung to make a beautiful headpiece, a band. It would tie there. It would decorate her forehead. If you've seen pictures taken from ancient frescoes and ancient art, you'll see pictures of women in the Middle East with ten coins across their forehead. That means that she is married. That she belongs to the one whose name was on those coins.

But if she had been unfaithful, if she had become an adulteress, a coin would be taken out of the middle to show her faithlessness and she would live a life of disgrace. Now, you can understand why this woman, having ten coins and she's lost one of them. She's searching diligently to find it because that would mean disgrace. And, it is Satan's aim to make your life a disgrace to the God who created you, to the one who wants to be your husband spiritually.

And, here was a coin, lost in the dark, lost in the dirt, lost in disgrace. And, Jesus said, these people that I keep company with, they're like that. I see their weakness like a lost sheep. I see their worthlessness like lost silver. And, that's why I keep company

with them.

### **C. Man Is Wretched Like a Lost Son**

Then the Lord Jesus went on in this story and He speaks also, not only of their weakness and their worthlessness, but He speaks of their wretchedness. Look if you will in verse eleven. He said, “A certain man had two sons. And, the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And, he divided unto them his living.”

Now, what did he mean, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. In plain English, he was saying, Father, I would like to have mine inheritance now. What you were going to leave me when you die, I'd like to have it now. If you really think through that, he's saying, I wish you were dead. I wish you were dead. I don't want you. I want yours.

He's like a lot of people today. They don't want God, but they want to breathe God's air. They want to eat God's food. They want to walk on God's green earth. Some of them even want to live forever. But they don't want God. “Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And, he divided unto them his living.” That is, he said, all right, son, here it is and he gave him prematurely his inheritance. Verse thirteen. “Not many days after that, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living.” Wine, women, sodomy. He was having a big time on his father's money, on his premature inheritance. No God in his life. No father in his life. “And, when he had spent all, there rose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in want. And, he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.” Boys and girls, that's pigs, hogs. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger.

Now, our Lord is speaking not only of the weakness of these people and the worthlessness of these people but he's speaking of the wretchedness of these people. And, he's saying, this is why I keep company with them. Look at this boy, this boy now who's left his father's home. He's gone to the far country. Some wicked city there where he can live his life high, wide and handsome. But soon, his pleasure turns to poverty. What is the mark of a man without God?

#### **1. A Life of Depression**

First of all, it's a life of depression. He's spent all. He's spent all. What is Jesus telling us? Listen to me. Young people, listen to me. College students, listen to me. Businessman, listen to me. The most costly thing in the world is sin—is sin. When he had spent all. Sin cost character. It cost influence. It cost reputation. It cost time. It cost

health. It cost love, home, money. It will cost you your soul. It cost to serve Satan. It will cost you your soul. It cost to serve Satan. It cost everyday. It cost every step of the way.

## **2. A Life of Degradation**

It was a life of depression. It was a life of degradation. Look if you will in verse fifteen. The Bible says, “and when he'd spent all, he joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his field to feed swine.” Now, his friends were with him when he had plenty of money. But now his friends have deserted him. He has nowhere to go and he gets a job now, taking care of pigs. Jesus had a Jewish audience.

In the Bible, a swine is an unclean animal. And, I believe all of us would do better if never ate any more pork, very frankly. And, I'll hear from the pork dealers. Swine is an unclean animal and a good self-respecting Jew would never touch a pig, not with a ten-foot pole. And, here is a Jewish boy. Now, down there not only feeding swine, but hungry enough to eat what the swine themselves fed on.

In this day, if a man gets low, we say he's gone to the dogs. In that day, he's gone to the hogs. Here's a life of depression and a life of degradation. He's as low as he can get it seems.

## **3. A Life of Dissatisfaction**

But now, it goes on also, a life not only of depression and degradation but a life of dissatisfaction. The Bible says in verse sixteen says that he's hungry. He's hungry. And, what he thought would satisfy him has not satisfied him. And, “now he would fane fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat and no man gave unto him”.

And, what is our Lord talking about. Oh, friend, if you can only see it. Jesus is talking about the emptiness of a life without God.

Now, physically, you may go home today to a Father's Day lunch of filet mignon, but if you don't know God, there's a part of you that's just like that boy down there feeding on the husks that the swine did eat. There is a hunger that can only be satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for by sin undermine. I have the secret, I know where 'tis found. Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.

And, so our Lord is saying what? Our Lord is saying, you want me tell you why I keep company with sinners. They're weak like a lost sheep. They're worthless like a lost coin. They are wretched like a lost son. That is the sinful nature of man.

## **II. The Saving Nature of God**

And, now, turn it over. And, I want you to see the saving nature of God, because not only in this parable is man revealed away from God, but God is revealed. The Lord Jesus is teaching us what God is like. How God looks upon fallen, ruin humanity. And,

you see God pictured number one, as a shepherd, looking for a sheep. You see God pictured number two, as a woman seeking for a lost coin. And, you see God pictured number three, as a father, seeking a lost son.

### **A. The Lost Sheep: The Rescuing Nature of the Son**

Now, in the story of the lost sheep, you see the rescuing nature of the son. Jesus is the good shepherd. You remember what Jesus said in Luke nineteen verse ten, “the son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost”. That’s why Jesus came. Jesus said, I’m the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Why did Jesus leave the glories of heaven and come to the agonies of earth, to seek the lost. Why did Jesus leave the golden streets of glory and walk the dusty streets of Galilee? To save the lost. Why did Jesus leave his scepter of righteousness and come and take a wilted reed in His hand as they mocked Him? To seek the lost. Why did the Lord Jesus Christ leave His diadem of glory and wear a crown of thorns? The son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. Why did Jesus settle Calvary’s dust with His blood? The son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.

The Lord Jesus is seeking you today. If you’re listening by television, Jesus is seeking you. If you’re here as a guest today and you just thought you were coming to a worship service, God put this message on my lips and in my heart as a message to you that Jesus Christ today is the good shepherd, you’re the lost sheep and Jesus Christ today is seeking you, the lost sheep and the shepherd pictures God the son.

### **B. The Lost Coin: The Revealing Nature of the Spirit**

But the lost coin and the woman pictures God the Holy Spirit. Because you also here have a picture of the Holy Spirit of God. Notice if you will in verse eight of this wonderful, wonderful story. “Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house and diligently until she find it”. What is the job of the Savior? To seek the lost. But what is the job and the duty and the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Two fold.

#### **1. The Ministry of Enlightenment**

First of all, there is a ministry of enlightenment. This woman lights a light. You see, before I preached today, I got down on my knees and I prayed oh God, help them to understand. Why? why? Because I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. He’s the light. He is the light. The woman lights a lamp.

#### **2. The Ministry of Disturbance**

And, then not only does she light a lamp, she takes a broom and begins to sweep. You see, that’s the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Enlightenment, and to stir us—to stir it up. To stir up your heart, that you might come to know Jesus as your personal savior and

Lord.

So many people who are lost come to church on Sunday morning but they're never stirred. They're never moved. And, I'll tell you why it's because those of us who really know God and understand God don't pray for that divine disturbance. Everybody without Jesus ought to leave a service disturbed. Isn't that right? Or else, get saved. Get saved. That's the job. That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit: enlightenment and disturbance. She lighted a lamp. She took a broom.

### **C. The Lost Son: The Receiving Nature of the Father**

You see, in this parable, you have a picture of God, the Son, seeking. You have a picture of God the Holy Spirit enlightening, disturbing. But thank God you also have a picture of God the Father receiving. There's the rescuing nature of the Son. There is the revealing nature of the Spirit and there's the receiving nature of the Father. There's the receiving nature of the Father.

Now here's the picture. This boy has gone off. I mean, he is away—he's away from God the Father. The Father's sitting there. I can see Him on the veranda, the front porch of the old house. And, now he goes to check the mailbox again. He hadn't heard from the boy. Oh, Ma, where do you think our boy is? Do you think he's safe, Mother? Oh, I wish he'd come home. I wish we could hear from our boy. He's been gone so long. I don't know whether it was one, two, three, five years, but here's the prodigal now. He's down in the hog pen. He begins to think. He says, even the hired servants of my father are better off than I am. I perish with hunger and they're well fed. Then, he made a decision. And, oh, how I pray you'll make it today. Do you know what he said? He said, I will arise and go to my father. I will arise and go to my father.

Now, will God the Father receive Him? I want you to see the picture. He begins, points his heart toward home. There's the father sitting on the front porch of the house. He's looking down the road a long way. The Bible says, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion on him and ran to meet him." His father saw him, had compassion—that means his father loved him—and it says that he ran to meet him.

Do you know, in the Bible you never see God in a hurry. God in the Bible, never ahead of time, never late moves deliberate majesty, but this is one time you see God in a hurry. I want you to see the old man as he gathers up his robe and the old man running down the road to meet this son. And, the Bible says, and when he saw him he feel on his neck and kissed him and said to his servants, put a ring on his hand, put shoes on his feet, put a robe on his back and kill the fatted calf. We're going to have a party. This, my son, was dead and is alive again. He was lost. He's found. And, they began to be merry.

What's Jesus talking about? Jesus said, you want me to tell you why I keep

company with sinners. They're weak like a lost sheep. They're worthless like a lost coin. They're wretched like a lost son, but let me tell you what god is like. There's the rescuing nature of God the Son. There's the revealing nature of God the Spirit. And, there's the receiving nature of God the Father.

## **Conclusion**

Now, I want to say to you on this Father's Day, there is a heavenly Father whose arms are wide open to anybody who wants Him, anybody who sees their need of Him, anybody who wants to be saved, God will save you. I promise. I may be speaking to someone this morning who thinks you've gone too far. But I want to tell you, you have not. You show me anytime, any place, anywhere where anybody comes to God and He doesn't save them, I'll close my Bible and never preach again, but the Bible says, whosoever will may come. And, Jesus says, him that cometh unto me, I'll in no wise cast out.

Isn't that a wonderful story? A wonderful story. And, God brought you here today to hear it.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. I wonder how many today could say, Pastor Rogers, I know that I am saved and I know that I know that if I died today, I'd go straight to heaven. Thank you for that. Take it down. Now, if you don't know it for certain, today is the day, if you would pray a prayer like this, God I'm a sinner and I'm lost and I need to be saved. Jesus, you died to save me. You're the good shepherd. You gave your life for this lost sheep. I believe you died for me and I believe if I'll trust you today, you'll save me. If you'll trust Him, He will save you.

The Bible says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Father, I pray that today, many, many, many will say yes to Christ. Holy Spirit of God, do your work to enlighten and disturb and to point people to God the Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# The Father's Heart

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 20, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15:1–32**

*“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”*

LUKE 15:20

## Outline

Introduction

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- A. Man's Weakness: People Are Like a Lost Sheep
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- B. Man's Worthlessness: People Are Like Lost Silver
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- C. Man's Wretchedness: People Are Like a Lost Son
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Conclusion

## Introduction

The message today: “The Father's Heart.” There's no passage in all of the Bible that explains the heart of God the Father, therefore, is a heart of instruction for every father, than Luke chapter fifteen—Luke chapter fifteen. I read the first three verses—Luke fifteen, one through three. Then drew near unto Him all the tax collectors and sinners to hear him and the Pharisees and Scribes murmured saying, this man receiveth sinners and He eateth with them. And He spoke this parable unto them.

Now, let me give you the setting. Jesus Christ would eat and drink with unsaved people. He loved them. He kept company with them because He wanted to bring them to Himself. He wanted them to receive forgiveness and redemption and salvation and freedom. But the Pharisees hated Jesus for this.

Now, you know who the Pharisees were. They were the religious crowd of that day, but they were so self-righteous. And in these Pharisees, the milk of human kindness had curdled, and so they criticized the Lord Jesus for receiving sinners and for eating with sinners. And by the way, it doesn't take much size to criticize. That's very easy to do.

And, every church has its critics. One little country church, a pastor stood up and said Brother Jones, would you please lead us in a word of criticism. Brother Jones was known for that. But Jesus is answering that criticism. Why does He keep company with sinners? I want you to know before I even get into this message very deeply. I am so grateful that He does. So grateful that He does, because if He didn't, He wouldn't have anything to do with me. Thank God for a Savior who receives sinners!

Now, Jesus gave a parable in answer to this criticism. Sometimes we say there are three parables because there's the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. There are all in this one chapter. Because they are all in this one chapter we say, there are three parables. But if you'll look carefully, it doesn't say that Jesus spoke parables to them. It says, He spoke a parable to them. This is one big parable. It deals with the father heart of God, the way that God looks at lost people, the way that God looks at sinners. And it is a parable of a lost sheep, lost silver, and a lost son. All of this makes one great big parable. And I want you to listen carefully because it tells how God looks at you, how God feels toward you, and therefore, how you ought to feel toward others, and how you look at others.

In the parable, we see basically two things. I want you to get it. First of all, we see the sinful nature of man. And secondly, we see the saving nature of God. Do you have it?

## **I. The Sinful Nature of Man**

Let's look as we look into this chapter and see first of all the story of the sinful nature of man. And, first of all, he deals with the sheep. Look with me in verses four through seven. Jesus said, what man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it. And, when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And, when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, rejoice with me for I have found my sheep, which was lost. And, I say unto you that likewise, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety

and nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

### **A. Man's Weakness: People Are Like a Lost Sheep**

When Jesus here is speaking of the sheep, He's teaching us that the chief characteristic of the sheep is weakness. Weakness. A sheep is weak and that illustrates a man without God. Now, it's not much of a compliment to be called a sheep. We have sort of an overblown idea of sheep. Let me tell you three things about sheep.

#### **1. A Sheep Is Dumb**

Number one, a sheep is stupid. That's right. A sheep is stupid. A sheep is dumb. That's the reason the Bible says in Isaiah chapter fifty-three, all we like sheep have gone astray. If you've gone to the circus, you may have seen a trained elephant, trained lions and tigers, dogs and horses, but you've never seen a trained sheep. Think about it. You ever see a sheep doing tricks? You never will. Sheep are dumb. And, the Bible says, all we like sheep have gone astray. A sheep is so easily lost. The lost will return to the stall. The cows will come home. The dog can find his way home. Did you ever try to get rid of a cat? But a sheep, he'll nibble here. He'll browse there. He'll go over here and he just keeps going, because a sheep is dumb and so is man without God.

Now, I don't care if you're a Ph.D. It matters not if you are a rocket scientist, a philosopher, a scholar. The Bible says in Romans chapter three, concerning spiritual things, there is none that understandeth. Nicodemus was a brilliant man. He was a master in Israel. He had his M.I. He had his master's degree but he didn't have his BA. He wasn't born again. And, Jesus said to him. Art thou a master in Israel and understandest not these things? When Jesus talked to him about being born again.

And, so you may be listening to me today. You may have a high IQ. You may be in the upper echelons of intellectual society. But listen to me today. You cannot think your way to God. You cannot think your way to God. There is none that understandeth, the Bible says, no not one. And, that's found in Romans chapter three and verse eleven. And so first of all, a sheep is dumb.

#### **2. A Sheep Is Dependent**

Second thing I want you to think about a sheep, a sheep is dependent. That's the reason sheep need a shepherd. Jesus said, he had compassion upon them because they were like a sheep without a shepherd. A sheep without a shepherd, therefore, is going to be destroyed and devoured because he is so dependent. In his book, a shepherd looks at the sheep. Keller tells about a sheep and a condition that a sheep would get in that the English shepherds would call a cast sheep.

What would happen is this: that after the sheep would browse, the sheep would lie down, perhaps in a crevice or a hollow place on the ground where there was a little depression. Maybe he would stretch his legs, and when he would, the center of gravity

would shift a little bit and he would roll slightly on his back. Trying to get up as he pawed, he would roll further on his back and there the sheep would not be able to get his legs back on the ground because a sheep does not have that much agility and the sheep would paw frantically in the air and sometimes bleat trying to get up, but he could not get his feet back on the ground. That is what they would call a cast sheep.

After a while, the gases would begin to build up in the abdominal cavity and circulation would be cut off to the legs and that sheep lying there would be an easy prey for vultures and for coyotes or for whatever predator would come along and the sheep would lie there and die and be devoured, unless the shepherd would come, count his sheep, see that one was missing, go out and find that sheep and put it back on its feet. And, so it is with me and so it is with you.

So, many times I've gotten myself into a position where I was totally helpless, had not the shepherd come and put me back on my feet. Isn't that right?

### **3. A Sheep Is Defenseless**

You see, a sheep is dumb. And, a sheep is dependent. I tell you a third thing about a sheep. Not only is a sheep dumb and not only is a sheep dependent, but a sheep is defenseless. Defenseless. The sheep does not have the mechanism of defense.

A horse can run. A bear can crush. The tiger can slash. The skunk, we know what he can do. But what can a sheep do? A sheep is not built for fight, nor flight. It can't run fast. It can hardly swim. A sheep is a defenseless animal.

I read sometime years ago of some tourists in the Scottish Highlands. There were up on a mountainside and one man had some binoculars and he was looking across the valley to another mountain. He said, look, he said to the guy. Is that sheep over there on that ledge? The guide said, yes it is. He said, How did it get there? He said, well, it's the nature of the sheep in this area. They come down the mountainside, browsing and grazing and they'll drop from one ledge to another, and then sometimes like this sheep they'll get on a ledge too narrow for them to turn around and they cannot make their way back up the mountain.

The tourist said, What will happen to that sheep? The guide said, the eagles will get him. If you'll stay and watch, you'll see. And, so they watched and after a while there came a formation of five eagles flying together with a lead eagle. And, they spotted that sheep there, that helpless sheep there on the mountainside and the lead eagle fell like a rock upon the head of that helpless sheep. The sheep went to his knees and stood up. Again, the eagles circled, and came down like a rock upon the head of the hapless sheep. By that time, the sheep was so frightened and so frustrated, it turned and tried to turn around and scramble up the mountainside. Of course, when it did, it fell from the narrow ledge and plummeted to the bottom of that gorge. Hundreds of feet below and was crushed and five eagles swept down and feasted on the body of that sheep. The

sheep was defenseless. I want to also that you and I are totally defenseless against Satan's eagles.

Do we not have a shepherd and had we not a shepherd, we would be like that poor sheep, devoured by those eagles, and that's the reason the Lord Jesus said to these Pharisees, you want to tell you why I keep company with these people. You have criticized me for eating and for drinking with sinners. But I tell you why I do it. They're like sheep without a shepherd.

## **B. Man's Worthlessness: People Are Like Lost Silver**

And, Jesus here spoke of the weakness of man without God. But it tells of the worthlessness of man without God. Look in the second story here in verse eight. Either, what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth light a candle or a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it and when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors saying, rejoice with me for I have found the piece that was lost.

Now, here our Lord no longer speaking of the lost sheep, but he's talking of the lost silver. Not only the weakness of man without God, but the worthlessness of man without God. What good is a piece of silver, what good is a piece of money, if it's lost? It can't be spent and it cannot be treasured. It has become unprofitable.

And, not only does the Bible say that there's none that understandeth. The Bible also tells us, in Romans chapter three and verse twelve, that without God we're unprofitable. Listen, they're all gone out of the way. That's the lost sheep. They're altogether become unprofitable. That's the lost silver. They've all gone out of the way. They have altogether become unprofitable. There is none that is good. No not one.

Now, why did God make you? Why did God create you? What is your purpose? It is to spend and be spent for Him or to be a treasure for Him, but you are not to be lost. And, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, you're like a coin that is lost, out of circulation. Not doing the things that you were meant to do and no good to your master.

Now, I want you to see how this coin was lost.

### **1. Lost in the Darkness**

First of all, it was lost in the darkness. Look in verse eight. In order to find the coin, the woman had to do what? She had to light a candle. She had to light a lamp and every man, every woman, every boy without Jesus Christ is lost in the darkness.

John chapter three verse nineteen, and this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

### **2. Lost in the Dirtiness**

But not only was it lost in the darkness; it was lost in the dirtiness. Not only did she light a lamp; but she took a broom and she began to sweep the house. What filth must

have been on the floor, for a woman to take a broom and have to sweep in order to find a coin. What a sloppy housewife. Here's a woman. Here's a woman who has to sweep the floor in order to find a lost coin. Why? Because it was lost in the dark and it was lost in the dirt. And, again, that's a picture of these people that Jesus was keeping company with. That's also a picture of you.

Well, you say, no Pastor Rogers, I don't live a dirty life. You say, yes, I'm a very fine person. I'm one of the best people in our neighborhood. I'm a member of the garden society. I'm a member of this club or that club. I'm a member of the lodge. I'm a member of the PTA. I pay my taxes. I give to the Red Cross. I'm a very fine person. Do you know what the Bible says about those things that you call fine? The Bible says, your righteousness is as what? Filthy rags in the sight of God. Your righteousness—I'm not talking about your unrighteousness. I'm talking about the things that you count for righteousness are as filthy rags in the sight of God.

And, so you may think you're brilliant, but God says, spiritually, you're stupid. You may think that you are moral, but God says, spiritually, your righteousness is as filthy rags.

### **3. Lost in Disgrace**

This coin, lost in the dark, lost in the dirt, and it was lost in disgrace—in disgrace. Now, why did Jesus say...? Look again here in verse eight.

One woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one... Why did Jesus say ten pieces of silver? Ten in the Bible is what? The full number, the complete number. Seven the perfect number, but ten the complete number. Five and five—ten.

Now, when a woman got married in this day, rather than a wedding ring, she was given a bando, a string of ten coins. Each one of those coins had her husband's name on it. And, there was a ribbon that ran through the center of each coin. Because in each coin there was a hole and those coins were strung to make a beautiful headpiece, a bandon. It would tie there. It would decorate her forehead. If you've seen pictures taken from ancient freezes and ancient art, you'll see pictures of women in the Middle East with ten coins across their forehead. That means that she is married. That she belongs to the one whose name was on those coins.

But if she had been unfaithful, if she had become an adulteress, a coin would be taken out of the middle to show her faithlessness and she would live a life of disgrace. Now, you can understand why this woman, having ten coins and she's lost one of them. She's searching diligently to find it because that would mean disgrace. And, it is Satan's aim to make your life a disgrace to the God who created you, to the one who wants to be your husband spiritually.

And, here was a coin, lost in the dark, lost in the dirt, lost in disgrace. And, Jesus said, these people that I keep company with, they're like that.

### **C. Man's Wretchedness: People Are Like a Lost Son**

I see their weakness like a lost sheep. I see their worthlessness like lost silver. And, that's why I keep company with them. Then the Lord Jesus went on in this story and he speaks also, not only of their weakness and their worthlessness, but he speaks of their wretchedness. Look if you will in verse eleven. He said, a certain man had two sons. And, the younger of them said to his father. Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And, he divided unto them his living.

Now, what did he mean, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. In plain English, he was saying, father, I would like to have mine inheritance now. What you were going to leave me when you die, I'd like to have it now. If you really think through that, he's saying I wish you were dead. I wish you were dead. I don't want you. I want yours.

He's like a lot of people today. They don't want God, but they want to breathe God's air. They want to eat God's food. They want to walk on God's green earth. Some of them even want to live forever. But they don't want God. Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And, he divided unto them his living. That is, he said, all right, son, here it is. And he gave him prematurely his inheritance. Verse thirteen. Not many days after that, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living. Wine, women, sodomy. He was having a big time on his father's money, on his premature inheritance. No God in his life. No father in his life. And, when he had spent all, there rose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in want. And, he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. Boys and girls, that's pigs, hogs. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger.

Now, our Lord is speaking not only of the weakness of these people and the worthlessness of these people but he's speaking of the wretchedness of these people. And, he's saying, this is why I keep company with them. Look at this boy. This boy now who's left his father's home. He's gone to the far country, some wicked city there where he can live his life high, wide and handsome. But soon, his pleasure turns to poverty. What is the mark of a man without God?

#### **A. A Life of Depression**

First of all, it's a life of depression. He's spent all. He's spent all. What is Jesus telling us? Listen to me. Young people listen to me. College students, listen to me. Businessman, listen to me. The most costly thing in the world is sin—is sin. When he had spent all, sin cost character. It cost influence. It cost reputation. It cost time. It cost health. It cost love, home, money. It will cost you your soul. It cost to serve Satan. It will

cost you your soul. It cost to serve Satan. It cost everyday. It cost every step of the way. It was a life of depression.

### **B. A Life of Degradation**

It was a life of degradation. Look if you will in verse fifteen. The Bible says, and when he'd spent all, he joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his field to feed swine. Now, his friends were with him when he had plenty of money. But now his friends have deserted him. He has nowhere to go and he gets a job now, taking care of pigs. Jesus had a Jewish audience.

In the Bible, a swine is an unclean animal. And, I believe all of us would do better if never ate any more pork, very frankly. And, I'll here from the pork dealers. Swine is an unclean animal and a good self-respecting Jew would never touch a pig, not with a ten-foot pole. And, here is a Jewish boy. Now, down there not only feeding swine, but hungry enough to eat what the swine themselves fed on.

In this day, if a man gets low, we say he's gone to the dog. In that day, he's gone to the hogs. Here's a life of depression and a life of degradation. He's as low as he can get it seems.

### **C. A Life of Dissatisfaction**

But now, it goes on also, a life not only of depression and degradation but a life of dissatisfaction. The Bible says in verse sixteen says that he's hungry. He's hungry. And, what he thought would satisfy him has not satisfied him. And, now he would fain fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat and no man gave unto him. And, what is our Lord talking about. Oh, friend, if you can only see it. Jesus is talking about the emptiness of a life without God.

Now, physically you may go home today to a father's day lunch of filet minion, but if you don't know God, there's a part of you that's just like that boy down there feeding on the husks that the swine did eat. There is a hunger that can only be satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for by sin undermine. I have the secret, I know where 'tis found. Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.

And, so our Lord is saying what? Our Lord is saying, you want me tell you why I keep company with sinners. They're weak like a lost sheep. They're worthless like a lost coin. They are wretched like a lost son. That is the sinful nature of man.

## **II. The Saving Nature of God**

And, now, turn it over. And, I want you to see the saving nature of God, because not only in this parable is man revealed away from God, but God is revealed. The Lord Jesus is teaching us what God is like. How God looks upon fallen, ruin humanity. And,

you see God pictured number one, as a shepherd, looking for a sheep. You see God pictured number two, as a woman seeking for a lost coin. And, you see God pictured number three, as a father, seeking a lost son.

### **A. The Lost Sheep: The Rescuing Nature of the Son**

Now, in the story of the lost sheep, you see the rescuing nature of the son. Jesus is the good shepherd. You remember what Jesus said in Luke nineteen verse ten, the son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. That's why Jesus came. Jesus said, I'm the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Why did Jesus leave the glories of heaven and come to the agonies of earth, to seek the lost. Why did Jesus leave the golden streets of glory and walk the dusty streets of Galilee? To save the lost. Why did Jesus leave his scepter of righteousness and come and take a wilted reed in his hand as they mocked him? To seek the lost. Why did the Lord Jesus Christ leave his diadem of glory and wear a crown of thorns? The son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. Why did Jesus settle Calvary's dust with his blood? The son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.

The Lord Jesus is seeking you today. If you're listening by television, Jesus is seeking you. If you're here as a guest today and you just thought you were coming to a worship service, God put this message on my lips and in my heart as a message to you that Jesus Christ today is the good shepherd, you're the lost sheep and Jesus Christ today is seeking you, the lost sheep and the shepherd pictures God the son.

### **B. The Lost Coin: The Revealing Nature of the Spirit**

But the lost coin and the woman pictures God the Holy Spirit, because you also here have a picture of the Holy Spirit of God.

Notice if you will in verse eight of this wonderful, wonderful story. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house and diligently until she find it. What is the job of the Savior? To seek the lost. But what is the job and the duty and the ministry of the Holy Spirit? Twofold.

#### **1. His Ministry of Enlightenment**

First of all, there is a ministry of enlightenment. This woman lights a light. You see, before I preached today, I got down on my knees and I prayed oh God, help them to understand. Why? why? Because I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. He's the light. He is the light. The woman lights a lamp.

#### **2. His Ministry of Disturbance**

And, then not only does she light a lamp, she takes a broom and begins to sweep. You see, that's the ministry of the Holy Spirit: enlightenment and to stir us—to stir it up. To stir up your heart, that you might come to know Jesus as your personal savior and

Lord.

So many people who are lost come to church on Sunday morning but they're never stirred. They're never moved. And, I'll tell you why it's because those of us who really know God and understand God don't pray for that divine disturbance. Everybody without Jesus ought to leave a service disturbed. Isn't that right? Or else, get saved. Get saved. That's the job. That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit: enlightenment and disturbance. She lighted a lamp. She took a broom.

### **C. The Lost Son: The Receiving Nature of the Father**

You see, in this parable, you have a picture of God, the Son, seeking. You have a picture of God the Holy Spirit enlightening, disturbing. But thank God you also have a picture of God the Father receiving.

There's the rescuing nature of the Son. There is the revealing nature of the Spirit and there's the receiving nature of the Father. There's the receiving nature of the Father.

Now, here's the picture. This boy has gone off. I mean, he is away—he's away from God the Father. The Father's sitting there. I can see Him on the veranda, the front porch of the old house. And, and he there's no he goes to check the mailbox again. He hadn't heard from the boy. Oh ma, where do you think our boy is. Do you think he's safe mother. Oh, I wish he's come home. I wish we could hear from our boy. He's been gone so long. I don't know whether it was one, two, three five years, but here's the prodigal now. He's down in the hog pen. He begins to think. He says, even the hired servants of my father are better off than I am. I perish with hunger and they're well fed. Then, he made a decision. And, oh how I pray God you'll make it today. Do you know what he said? He said, I will arise and go to my father. I will arise and go to my father.

Now, will God the Father receive Him? I want you to see the picture. He begins, points his heart toward home. There's the father sitting on the front porch of the house. He's looking down the road a long way. The Bible says, when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion on him and ran to meet him. His father saw him, had compassion—that means his father loved him, and it says that he ran to meet him.

Do you know, in the Bible you never see God in a hurry. God in the Bible, never ahead of time, never late moves deliberate majesty, but this is one time you see God in a hurry. I want you to see the old man as he gathers up his robe and the old man running down the road to meet this son. And, the Bible says, and when he saw him he fell on his neck and kissed him and said to his servants, put a ring on his hand, put shoes on his feet, put a robe on his back and kill the fatted calf. We're going to have a party. This, my son, was dead and is alive again. He was lost. He's found. And, they began to be merry.

What's Jesus talking about? Jesus said, you want me to tell you why I keep company with sinners. They're weak like a lost sheep. They're worthless like a lost coin. They're wretched like a lost son, but let me tell you what God is like. There's the rescuing nature of God the Son. There's the revealing nature of God the Spirit. And, there's the receiving nature of God the Father.

## **Conclusion**

Now, I want to say to you on this Father's Day. There is a heavenly Father whose arms are wide open to anybody who wants Him, anybody who sees their need of Him, anybody who wants to be saved, God will save you. I promise. I may be speaking to someone this morning who thinks you've gone to far, but I want to tell you, you have not. You show me anytime, any place, anywhere where anybody comes to God and He doesn't save them, I'll close my Bible and never preach again, but the Bible says, whosoever will may come. And, Jesus says, him that cometh unto me, I'll in no wise cast out.

Isn't that a wonderful story? A wonderful story. And, God brought you here today to hear it.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. I wonder how many today could say, Pastor Rogers, I know that I'm saved and I know that I know that if I died today, I'd go straight to heaven. Thank you for that. Take it down. Now, if you don't know it for certain, today is the day, if you would pray a prayer like this, God I'm a sinner and I'm lost and I need to be saved. Jesus you died to save me. You're the good shepherd. You gave your life for this lost sheep. I believe you died for me and I believe if I'll trust you today, you'll save me. If you'll trust him, he will save you.

The Bible says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Father, I pray that today, many, many, many will say yes to Christ. Holy Spirit of God, do your work to enlighten and disturb and to point people to God the Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Is There a Little Pharisee in Me?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 16, 1989

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 15:11–32

*“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.”*

LUKE 15:29

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Performance of a Pharisee
- II. The Pout of a Pharisee
- III. The Pride of a Pharisee
- IV. The Presumption of a Pharisee
- V. The Portion of a Pharisee

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you turn, please, to Luke chapter 15. Right away your mind tells you that's the story of the prodigal son. But we're not going to be talking about the prodigal son; we're going to be talking about his brother. So many times we read about the prodigal son and the wickedness that he got into, but we fail to understand what our Lord was teaching in that story. He does teach that He receives prodigals home, and we thank God for that. But He was teaching more than that. Luke chapter 15 and verse 11: *“And he said,”*—that is, Jesus said—*“A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he”*—that is, his father—*“divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey to a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he”*—that is, the citizen—*“sent him into his fields to feed swine.”*

Now, remember, this was a Jewish boy. Jesus is talking to Jewish people. A self-respecting Jew would not touch a pig with a ten-foot pole. And here's this boy out there in the hog pen feeding swine. And the Bible says, *“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he*

*came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."*

And almost every sermon that's preached on this subject ends at this verse. But let's go on and see what our Lord was teaching. *"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry,"*—that is, the elder brother was angry—*"and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid,"*—that is, a young goat—*"that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."* (Luke 15:11–32)

Now this story is about two kinds of sinners. Perhaps one of them will represent you. Perhaps the prodigal son will represent you. But in a congregation like this, I doubt it. But perhaps the elder brother will represent you. And in a congregation like this, I rather think that there will be some in that category, as we're going to see. Now Jesus was talking to the Pharisees and the religious leaders of His day. Go back and look at chapter 15, verses 1 and 2: *"Then drew near unto him all the [tax collectors] and sinners for to hear him."* Those are the ones represented by the younger brother, the one we call the prodigal son. Now, notice verse 2: *"And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."*

Now two kinds of sinners are in verses 1 and 2. In verse 1, you find the kind of sinner that we call the prodigal son. In verse 2, we find the kind of sinner that you call the elder brother, the Pharisee. The title of this message is simply this: "Is There a Little Pharisee in Me?" I want you to listen. I want you to think. I want you to ask yourself this

question: Is there a little Pharisee in me?

Now we know the story of the prodigal son, the younger brother. He was a rebel. He was a renegade. He was a rioter. He ended up penniless, shameless, friendless. Somebody said, “At first, he was sick of home. And then, he was homesick. And then, he was home.” It’s a wonderful story. It’s been told around the world, and we love the story. But there is another brother. We don’t hear about him. The story of this other brother is different. He stayed at home. And outwardly, he lived a very respectful life.

Now Jesus told this story to the Pharisees, the self-righteous religious sinners of their day: they had a loveless, judgmental religion, and it made it hard for them to see their sins. Now there are two kinds of sinners, but may I tell you that prodigal sons are easier to reach than Pharisees. I can tell you that after many years of experience in preaching the gospel. And I could tell you that if I’d never preached the gospel but only would read the Bible, because Jesus in Matthew chapter 21 and verse 31 told a story about two sons, and then He said this: “*Verily I say unto you, That the [tax collectors] and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*” (Matthew 21:31) He was talking to these Pharisees.

Now when He said tax collectors, He didn’t mean what we mean today by a tax collector. Today, tax collectors are not in the same category, though we sometimes think they are. But tax collectors in this day were crooks, shysters, connivers in league with Rome, and they were thought of as turncoats, the very worst of the worst, and Jesus said, “Tax collectors and harlots are going into the kingdom of God before you Pharisees.”

Now that is true, and Pharisaism is a very dangerous thing in our day and age. Although we don’t have people who call themselves Pharisees—that was a religious sect of the past—the principles of Pharisaism are with us today, and many times you’ll find Pharisees in Bible-believing, conservative, fundamental churches more than in other places. So I want you just to stay seated tonight. I don’t want you to look around and see if any of those other people are going to hear what I’m saying. I want you to ask yourself this question: Is there a little Pharisee in me? Several things I want you to notice.

## **I. The Performance of a Pharisee**

First of all, I want you to notice what I’m going to call the performance of a Pharisee. Now if there was ever a man who was a good, hard worker, who worked in his father’s house, it was this Pharisee. Notice here in verse 25 and following. We’re in Luke 15, verse 25. Now the Bible says, “*Now his elder son*”—that is, the father’s elder son—“*was in the field:*”—that is, he’s out there in the field working—“*and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants,*

*and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he*—the Pharisee—*“was angry,”*—the elder brother—*“and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.”* Now, notice in verse 29. Here’s the key: *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee,”*—now he was in the field when all of this happened. There are calluses on his hand. He is a hard worker. He says—*“neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.”* (Luke 15:25–29)

So you find a man here who knew how to perform. He puts a great deal of emphasis upon what he did for his father, but it was a kind of service that the father was not pleased with. It was legalistic service. Now it might have seemed that it was good service; it might have seemed that it was a wonderful performance, but it came from the wrong motivation. As we’re going to see, it wasn’t free. It wasn’t joyful. It wasn’t spontaneous. It was service for the wrong reason.

Now the Bible teaches that why you serve is as important, and really more important, than the service itself. Let’s take the matter of tithing. All of the Pharisees tithed. Jesus said, “Woe unto you, Pharisees, for you tithe mint, anise, and cumin.” (Matthew 23:23) That is, they had their little mint plants and they’d count the leaves: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten—that one is God’s. They literally counted the leaves. I mean, they were punctilious in all that they did.

Now many of you may tithe. And do you know why you tithe? Because you’re a Pharisee; because you think if you tithe, it will pay. Well, my dear friend, it pays to tithe. But if you tithe because it pays, it won’t. You say, “What are you talking about?” The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 7, *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Now here was a man who was working in the field for his father. Here was a man who said, “Father, I have kept all of the rules.” But Jesus is going to show that this man never really was saved. When a man serves for reward, it’s not long before he’s complaining that he’s not being blessed sufficiently. And it even gets worse when somebody else seems to be more blessed than he is blessed. God told His people in the Old Testament why He was going to judge them. And in Deuteronomy chapter 28, verse 47, this is what He said: *“Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things...”* (Deuteronomy 28:47)

Now if you are a Pharisee, you’re going to serve the Lord for a reward, not because of love. My friend, I want to tell you there is a liberty and a joy that flows out of a love for Christ, and love is the oil that lubricates the machinery of our lives so that our lives don’t groan when we serve the Lord Jesus Christ. And so you see the performance of this

Pharisee. He was very performance-oriented. In verse 29, he says, “I have served you all of these years.” My friend, you may have served in this church from the time it was constituted till this very day, and you can die and go to hell. You can be a Pharisee.

## II. The Pout of a Pharisee

I want you to see something else. I want you to see not only his performance; I want you to see his pout. Here was a man who had a real pout on. Look, if you will, in verse 27 of this same story. Now he learns in verse 27 they’re having a party: *“And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.”* Now, notice the pout: *“And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.”* (Luke 15:27–28)

Now his father goes out and says, “Son, come on in. Your brother has come home, the brother that we love, the brother that we’ve prayed for, the brother who’s been away, the brother who’s been living a life of sin. He’s come in! He’s come home! Now, Son, you come in and let’s rejoice with him!” But he wouldn’t come in. He stays outside. He has a pout on. You see, he needs to be corrected. But he won’t be corrected. He won’t hear what his father says. His father entreated him, but he never heard.

Now I want you to know that every Pharisee is self-righteous at heart, and his mind is generally set in concrete. He is not easily entreated. As a matter of fact, the Pharisees in this congregation tonight probably will not hear what I have to say. The Father through this message will be entreating you, but you won’t think that the message is for you. And you will not see the Pharisee that is in you. You’ll have a pout because of the way God does things that you don’t like. And you’ll have your own little pity party with yourself and your pout with God.

## III. The Pride of a Pharisee

Now, let’s narrow the focus a little bit more. We’ve talked about the performance of the Pharisee: he was out in the field working; he served his father for many years. We’ve talked about his pout now: he’s upset because his brother has come home, and they’re having a party for his brother, and he won’t be entreated by the father. But now I want you to go a step further and I want you to see the pride of this Pharisee. I’m going to show you why he had the pout. His pout was rooted in pride.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 29 of this chapter. The Bible says, *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee,”*—just underscore the word *I*—*“neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment:”*—underscore the word *I*—*“and yet thou never gavest me”*—underscore the word *me*—*“a kid, that I”*—underscore the word *I*—*“might make merry with my friends.”* (Luke 15:29) *I, me, and my*: he’s a self-centered person. He thinks of himself as a self-made man, and now he’s worshipping

his “creator.” He’s really jealous of his younger brother, and he feels that he is not getting what ought to come to him. You see, up until this time, when his brother had been away, and since he was the elder brother anyway, he was the undisputed heir. And now somebody else is in the center of attention. No longer is the elder brother the center of attention. Somebody else is the center of attention.

You see, every Pharisee, when he serves, has to be recognized; he has to be bragged on; he has to be considered—or else you’re in trouble with him. I’ve seen churches with Pharisees who serve, and you get them on a committee, and if you don’t give them the right strokes, you don’t give them the right recognition, they’re going to cause trouble. You had better remember to keep them in the center of everything. The Pharisee sees somebody else’s blessing as his loss.

I’ll give you an example. A church really starts to grow, and a Sunday School class, for example, grows, and it grows too much, and unsaved people come, and they start getting saved, and they start filling up that class. And the class has to be divided, or the class has to be moved. There will be somebody in that class who will almost invariably say, “Who are these people taking up this room around here? I mean, they’re messing up our class. Do you know what they want us to do? They want us to move to another room. They want to divide our class. These people are coming in here and messing up what we have.” Do you know what that is? That’s Luke 15. It’s exactly what that is. That is that selfishness, that pride, that says, “I was here first. This is mine. Who are these people? I mean, they haven’t worked like we work to build this church. Why should I move over? Why should I go over? Why should I take less and let somebody else have my place here?”

It’s an incredible thing. Sometimes I can’t even believe the attitude that somebody seems to have in some of these situations. You see, there’s the pride of a Pharisee. He’s so self-satisfied about his obedience and his service. Pride is always the mark of a Pharisee.

Do you remember the story Jesus told about the Pharisee and the publican who went to the temple to pray, and the Pharisee stood up, and the Bible says, “and he prayed with himself”? (Luke 18:11) That’s very interesting, because he wasn’t praying with God. He prayed with himself. And this is what he said: “God, I thank you that I’m not as other men are.” And then he rattled off his little list of good things that he did. And then Jesus said the other man, a publican—that means a tax collector—was there. He bowed his head. He would not even so much as lift his eyes to heaven. The Bible says he smote himself upon the breast. He prayed, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” (Luke 18:13) Actually, the Greek language says he said, “Be merciful to me, the sinner.” He saw himself as the chiefest of sinners. And then, do you know what Jesus said? Jesus said, “I tell you, that man went home justified rather than the other.” (Luke 18:14)

Two men went to church that day. One went home justified; one went home dignified. Here was one man who just told God what a wonderful man he was, and so forth; but he's just praying with himself. Here was another man who humbled himself before the Lord.

Do you know where we get this pride? We get this pride when we compare ourselves with other people. Here was this man, this Pharisee, comparing himself with his younger brother. The Pharisee loves to stretch himself out in the gutter alongside a prodigal and say, "I'm a little longer than he is. And so, what a good boy am I!" As I've told you before, *most of the people in America are egomaniacs who are strutting their way to hell thinking they're too good to be damned.*

#### **IV. The Presumption of a Pharisee**

Well, I want you to notice something else. I want you to notice not only his pride, but I want you to notice his presumption. He had an idea that he was better than the other person.

Now we need to understand that he was not better than the other person. If you read Romans chapter 1, it's the chapter that deals with the reprobates and the homosexuals and the perverts and all of these things—terrible, horrible sin. And the Apostle Paul mentions what we call the sin of the Gentiles—horrible, vile, filthy sin. He mentions that in Romans 1. But then in Romans 2, he talks to the self-righteous Jewish people of that day. In Romans 1, He talks about what we're going to call the rebellious sinner. Then in Romans 2, He talks about what we would call the religious sinner. And then He brings the conclusion.

And let's look at it in Romans chapter 3, verses 10 and following. I want you to see it tonight, because if you're a Pharisee, you're going to think you're such a good girl or such a good boy you don't need to be saved. I want you to look at it here in Romans chapter 3, and I begin in verse 10. Now, remember in chapter 1, He's talking about the rebellious sinner. In chapter 2, he's talking about the religious sinner. And then he sums it up—Romans 3, beginning in verse 10: *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."* (Romans 3:10–18)

That's the rebellious sinner. But now, continue to listen: *"Now we know that what things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law:"*—now, watch it—*"that every*

*mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*" (Romans 3:19–20)

What is Paul saying here? The same thing Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying, "Don't presume because you don't do bad things that you're not a sinner. Don't presume because you've had a better upbringing. Don't presume because you don't do all these vile, wicked things." Some people are going to go to hell because they're drunkards. But some people are going to go to hell because they never drank. I mean, they don't see their need of being saved. Listen to me. Jesus is saying in Luke 15 there is nobody so bad he can't be saved and nobody so good he need not be saved. See? Here's the presumption of this elder brother. He gets the idea that since he's been such a good boy, since he stayed at home, since he's not gone out and wasted his substance with riotous living, he doesn't need to be saved.

Now, you see, outwardly you can suppress your sin. The Pharisees did. Jesus spoke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23, verse 27, and this is what He said: "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*" (Matthew 23:27) Now in this day, the people didn't want to touch a grave, because they'd be made unclean. So what they did, they took whitewash and whitewashed the tombs. And they were beautiful. They glistened in the field. Jesus said, "You Pharisees are like that. You're whitewashed, but you're not washed white. You are outwardly beautiful. Inwardly, you are rotten."

I always enjoy watching airline stewardesses when I fly. You know, they train these girls to keep their cool. And I just watch them, you know, and somebody will criticize them, or complain, or curse them, and they'll say, "yes sir," "no sir," and they smile, you know. They give the coffee and all this. I just know when they get back up there in that little gallery, they say, "That old coot, *grrrrrrrr!*" But they know how to keep it in. I mean, they're just trained that way.

There are a lot of people, a lot of Pharisees, that way. They outwardly have that culture. They have that outward religion. You know, you might be like that prodigal son if you had had the same background, the same upbringing, that he had. You don't know. You don't know what proclivities might be in your heart.

## **V. The Portion of a Pharisee**

Oh, how presumptuous this man was, this Pharisee! You see his presumption. But I think the saddest thing I want you to see is not only his presumption, but I want you to see his portion. Now, you see, the younger brother said, "Father, give me the portion that falls to me." And he divided to him his living. That is, he got his inheritance and he

went off and wasted it.

Now the elder brother, what was his portion? His portion was the portion of the firstborn son. I mean, he had so much coming to him. But I want you to see how the story ends. This story doesn't have a happy ending. You know, notice what he says in verse 30: *"But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."* (Luke 15:30) Now the father entertains him, and the father says unto him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." (Luke 15:31) But the story ends with the elder brother on the outside and the younger brother on the inside. He didn't even say, "this my brother"; he said, *"this thy son."* That is, he had separated himself from his father. No longer is he calling his father his father, because he can't call his father his father until he calls his brother his brother: *"this thy son."*

The father went out of the house for both sons. When he saw that prodigal son coming, he ran to meet him, fell on his neck, kissed him, and hugged him. He went out for that son. He went out for the other son who was out in the field and would not come in. He went out of the house for both sons. The story ends with one son in and one son out.

I wonder today if you're not going to have the Pharisee's portion. I wonder tonight if there's not somebody in this church, you've lived such a good life, you worked in this church so long, you've served the Lord, you've never committed the sins of the flesh—there's just one thing wrong with you: you've never been saved. You don't love God. You've never been born again. If the story ended tonight, it would end with you on the outside and these so-called vile, wicked sinners on the inside.

## Conclusion

You know, you can always tell a Pharisee, because he doesn't have a love for the lost. You would have thought this boy would have said, "Dad, it's so great my brother has come home! Oh, I'm so grateful! Dad, let's rejoice! Oh, I'm so grateful! I've been praying for my brother." As a matter of fact, you would have thought that he would have said, "Dad, I can see your heart is broken. Dad, let's go look for him. Dad, is there anything I can do? Dad, let's pray for him."

I watch the Pharisees sometimes on Sunday. We give the invitation. I say, "Let's sing another stanza," and they say, "Oh..." You know what I'm talking about. They don't care about the younger brother. They don't care about the lost. They care about being first in the cafeteria line. They care about the ballgame. They care about this thing and that thing.

You think about this elder brother. Now I don't mean that you are lost. You can be saved and have a touch of the Pharisee in you. Ask yourself this question—not, am I a

Pharisee? just ask yourself this question: Is there any Pharisee in me? And be done with it. It's one of the ugliest, most loveless, things there can be. God deliver Bellevue Baptist Church from ever becoming a church full of Pharisees who are saying, "This is mine, and I don't care about these other people"! Friend, we've got to have an arm wide open for those prodigals. And if we love God, we're going to love what He loves—and He loves the lost.

# Sinners: Nasty or Nice

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: September 15, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15:11–32**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. You Must Measure Your Love for the Father by Your Love for Your Brother
- II. Service to God Is No Substitute for Fellowship with God
- III. A Self-Centered Life Will Always Steal Away Your Joy
- IV. This “Nice” Kind of Sin Is the Easiest to Disguise

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, the Lord Jesus was the master teacher, and one of the ways that He taught was through parables. And I suppose the parable that sticks in our hearts and minds and has become the predominant parable of all of the parables is the parable of the prodigal son. Would you open God’s Word, please, to Luke chapter 15, verse 11, and we’re going to read about the parable of the prodigal son. But even in introducing the parable, I have done what we so frequently do and called it the parable of the prodigal son. But, really, this is the story of two sons—not one, but two: a younger brother and an elder brother. And I believe that the elder brother has many brothers who may be here tonight, so I want you to listen very carefully: *“And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have*

*sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” (Luke 15:11–32)*

The title of our message tonight is “Sinners: Nasty or Nice.” Really, what we have here tonight is the story of two sons and two kinds of sinners: nasty sinners and nice sinners. Now, the prodigal son who came to his father and asked for the portion of goods that fell to him, and was given his inheritance, went to the far country. I suppose if he lived in Memphis, he may have gone down to New Orleans. He wasted his substance with wine, women, and song. He was a rebel. He was a renegade. He was a rioter. He ended up penniless. He ended up shameless. He ended up homeless. And that’s the story of this kind of a sinner.

Now he had a brother. The brother did not go away from home. The brother stayed at home. He lived a respectful life. He was outwardly obedient to his father. He was industrious. He was a hard worker. Morally, he was clean. And yet this man was also a sinner.

One was a nasty sinner; one was a nice sinner. One was guilty of the sins of the flesh; the other was guilty of the sins of the spirit. One was guilty of outward sin; the other was guilty of inward sin. One was guilty of gross sin; the other was guilty of subtle sin. And I daresay there are more in the second category than there are in the first in the congregation tonight. Many of us, however, pay little attention to the elder brother. And the reason we pay so little attention to the elder brother probably is we’re so much like him.

Now the fifteenth chapter of Luke is really a love story. And the story of the prodigal son is a love story. But the problem is the love that melted the heart of one hardened

the heart of another. And so this elder brother is the one I want us to talk about primarily: the sinner who was not nasty, the sinner who was nice. He was outwardly moral, but I want you to see how Jesus made havoc of his little list of virtues.

And you're going to find out that the Lord Jesus loved sinners, whoever they are, and wherever they are, but Jesus reserved His hottest words for these who were Pharisaical in their sin. And I believe that our churches are filled with people who are like this elder brother who have the spirit of a Pharisee—that is, the spirit of self-righteousness. They think that the gospel is for the thief, the murderer, the prostitute, the pervert, the drug addict; but they sit in churches, haughty, unbent, unbowed, unbroken, and they think that God is pleased with them. But I want you to listen very carefully and examine your heart, as I must examine my heart here, and make it bow before the throne of the Word of God.

Now, let me show you some things about this elder brother that our Lord, I believe, was saying to those Pharisees of His day. Incidentally, the fifteenth chapter of Luke was given as a response to the criticism by the Pharisees. The Pharisees nitpicked the ministry of Jesus. They criticized the ministry of Jesus. And do you know what they criticized Jesus for? Keeping company with sinners. And I, for one, am infinitely glad that He does and that He did, for if He didn't, there would be no room for me. And I'm so glad that Jesus had a heart full of love for sinners. But these Pharisees, in whose heart the milk of human kindness had curdled, were criticizing the Lord Jesus Christ. And the elder brother is a picture of those Pharisees who were criticizing the Lord Jesus.

Let me give you tonight four or five principles, and I want you to see if you see any Pharisee in you. You ask yourself this question: Is there a little Pharisee in me?

## **I. You Must Measure Your Love for the Father by Your Love for Your Brother**

First of all, the first principle is this: that you must measure your love for the Father by your love for your brother. Do you have it? You must measure your love for the Father by your love for the brother. Now, the Apostle John said the same thing in 1 John 4:20, when he said, *“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”* (1 John 4:20)

Now, some of us are like that elder brother. We say, “O God, I love you so much; all that thrills my soul is Jesus; and more love to thee, O Lord, more love to thee,” but we don't show any love for sinners who are away from God. We don't have our broken heart for brothers and sisters who are away from God. Many times we like to try to assume the place of a son without assuming the responsibility of a brother. But Jesus

Christ says very clearly in this parable—and the Bible in many places says it very clearly and plainly—that we can measure our love for God by our love for our brother.

Now, if a man doesn't love his brother whom he's seen, how can he love God whom he's not seen? Have you ever seen one of the big aluminum coffee urns, and people make coffee in those things? Sometimes you see them in the restaurant. And you can't see inside that thing. You can't see through it. But on the outside is a glass tube, and on that glass tube you see some coffee. And the higher the coffee on the tube, you know the more coffee is in the urn, because it's the glass tube on the outside that shows you how much coffee is on the inside. And, my dear friend, the way that you love your brother, that can be seen. And, dear friend, what can be seen is the measure, the real measure, of what is on the inside.

Now, here was this prodigal son. He'd been away from home. And finally he comes home penniless, shameless, friendless. But he stumbles home in rags, in tatters. You would have thought that this elder brother would have said, "Praise God! Hallelujah! My brother has come home! What a wonderful day! How grand it is! I wouldn't blame my dad if he were to overdo the festivities. I'm so glad that my brother is home!" But he was such a poor son because he was such a poor brother. He literally, I believe, was jealous of the fact that his brother was off living in sin. Perhaps he would have done the same thing, except he was afraid to do so. Maybe he was jealous of his brother's sin, and that's why he was so judgmental. He might have been like that woman in a country church in a prayer meeting on a Wednesday night when just a handful of people were there, and she prayed, "O God, bless us while we're down here at prayer meeting when so many of our members are out there having a good time." We feel that way sometimes. We're the only ones who love God, and we're the only ones who care. And maybe we're just a little jealous of some of those who are living high, wide, and handsome.

But, friend, put it down big, and put it down plain, and put it down straight: you can measure your love for God by your love for lost sinners; by your love for those who are away from the fold. Don't tell me you love God if you don't love the things that God loves.

## **II. Service to God Is No Substitute for Fellowship with God**

Second principle: Service to God is no substitute for fellowship with God. Look in verse 25: "*Now the elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.*" That is, because the younger son had come home, there was a party. "*And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come. and thy father hath killed the fatted calf,*

*because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry,*—now, the elder brother is literally angry because of the party—*“and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.”* Now, watch verse 29. It’s very interesting. I want you to notice five personal pronouns in this verse: *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.”* (Luke 15:25–29) *I, I, I, me* and *me*: here was man who says to his father, “Father, I have served you; I have been a model worker.” As a matter of fact, when the party was going on, where had the elder son been? He’d been out in the field working. And yet the import of this passage is that he was the kind of a son who really did not have true fellowship with his father. Put it down again. Service to God is no substitute for fellowship with God.

You’re going to find out that this boy who worked for his father never ever really knew his father’s heart. I mean, I can just imagine him. Evidently, the father was very wealthy, because the prodigal son says, “My father has bread enough and to spare.” That is, this was not a poor farm. This man was a very, very wealthy man. He had servants. He had a fatted calf. He had gold rings. He had fine raiment. He had robes. He had all of that.

Now, how did he have all of that? Well, evidently, he was a very successful farmer. And, you know, this son might have said, “You know, I don’t understand my dad. Why, just look at these crops. We’ve never had crops like this. Look at the cattle, how sleek they are. Look at the barns, how big they are, and how full they are. Look at all of these workers and these servants and these slaves that are here around this place. I just don’t understand my father. He has it all, and yet there seems to be a faraway look in my father’s eye. There seems to be hollowness in my father’s heart. There seems to be something that is bothering my father. I don’t understand him. It looks like he would be happy with all of this success. After all, I have been working and working and working.”

My dear friend, serving God and working in the church is no substitute for fellowship with God. All of this was simply legalistic service. He was serving for a reward. That’s what he was serving for. I mean, it’s very obvious. He said, “I did this, and did this, and I did this, and you didn’t reward me. You did not kill and barbeque a fatted calf for me, and yet you did for him.” You see, when you serve God for rewards, when you serve God legalistically, when you serve God for what you can get out of it, before long you’re going to be complaining that you are not sufficiently rewarded, and you’re going to be doubly upset if you think that someone else gets a bigger reward than you do.

Now, if you tithe because it pays to tithe, it won’t. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9:7, *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give. not grudgingly,*

*or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)*

Here was a son. He was working for his father, and yet he never knew his father’s heart. Are you following what Jesus Christ seems to teach in this parable, number one, dear friend, that your love for the Father is measured by your love for your brother? number two: that service for God is no substitute for fellowship with God? You ought to know the heart of your Father. You ought to know what is really concerning the heart of your Father.

What do you think really satisfies God the Father? You think this building pleases God the Father? Be careful how you answer. Do you think these choirs please God the Father? Do you think that this sermon pleases God the Father? It all depends. It all depends. You see, my dear friend, if all of this is not a means to bringing people to Christ, to reaching people, transforming lives, it’s all just splendid nothing.

Here was that beautiful farm. Here were the crops. There were the servants. There were the barns. But, my dear friend, the father’s heart says, “There’s a son out there that’s lost. He’s away from me.”

Some of us sit here and say, “Well, you know, I served on this committee. I worked in the retirement home, Bellevue Woods. I worked in the choir. I was on the building committee. I gave my money. I did this. I did that. I have done fine.” Friend, if you don’t have a heart to bring the lost to Jesus Christ, you’re just like this elder brother, talking about all that you’ve done, and yet you have missed the Father’s heart one hundred percent.

Here was a man who thought he was serving his father and he never knew his father’s heart. Service to the Father is never a substitute for fellowship with the Father.

### **III. A Self-Centered Life Will Always Steal Away Your Joy**

Number three: Such a self-centered life will always steal away your joy. Look, if you will again, in verse 29. Here’s this self-centered man—listen to him: *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet”—or fitting—“that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” (Luke 15:29–32)*

Now, you see, there was a party going on—there was merriment, and there was gladness—but this elder brother didn’t have any. Did you know the most miserable people in this world are self-centered people? You see, you can have it all and not have

joy. The father said, “All that I have is yours, son.” And yet that son was perfectly miserable. He’s outside. He’s got a pout on. He has no fellowship with his father. He has no fellowship with his brother. He has no fellowship with the servants. He is a man on the outside. Put it down, my dear friend: If you don’t share the Father’s burden, you can’t share the Father’s joy. If you don’t share the Father’s burden, you don’t share the Father’s joy.

I wonder how many tonight in this building really have joy. I mean, I wonder how many people tonight there are who have an infectious, bubbling-up joy. You say, “Well, pastor, if I would be very honest, I would tell you that I do not have joy.” Do you know why you don’t have joy? Because you’ve not been sharing the Father’s burden. If you have the Father’s burden, the lost, when the lost get saved, you’re going to share the Father’s joy.

Did you know that we have a very wonderful, wonderful church? We have a church where there are people who are saved in almost every service. My children—and I bless God for this—don’t know what it is to come to church and not see people baptized—I mean, all their lives. Now, in some churches, you don’t see that. I don’t take credit for that as a pastor. I’d be ashamed if it didn’t happen. I mean, that’s the normal thing. It ought to be happening. People out to be getting saved all the time. But, you know, there are a lot of folks who don’t get any joy out of that. They don’t get any bang out of that. The baptismal service is an imposition, makes the service a little longer. When the pastor is up there pleading for souls, they wish the invitation would get over. It is an imposition to them. I mean, I see folks, as soon as I finish the sermon, they look at their watch, and out that back door they go.

I’ve been thinking about this. I’ve been thinking about just saying, “You know, this morning we’re going to have an invitation. Those of you who want to receive Christ, you come forward, and they’ll greet you here at the front. Those of you who haven’t been tithing and want to tithe, you meet the usher at the back door.” And, friend, I know there are emergencies. I know there are times when people have to leave the service. I know that. But we have a lot of folks, friends, they don’t share the heart of God. They don’t rejoice when souls are saved. It doesn’t make any difference to them that a poor, lost sinner comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. And those people are perfectly miserable. They don’t know the Father’s heart.

You want me to tell you how to get joy? You get the burden of the Lord; you find out what burdens Jesus and let that burden you, and you let it burden you enough that God will make you a soul winner; you let it burden you enough that you will prepare yourself to bring somebody to Jesus; you let it burden you enough that you will pray that God will energize you and fill you with the Holy Spirit, and that God will lead you to the right

person; you go out and lead some person to Jesus, or point some person to Jesus, get in a service where that person is present, and that person that you've wept over and prayed over and witnessed to comes forward and gives his or her heart to Jesus Christ, and goes up there and is baptized in the water of believer's baptism; and I'll tell you, you'll leave this church leaping and dancing and praising God. You will be full of joy. The Bible says, *"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing"*—weeping and rejoicing. (Psalm 126:6) You get the Father's burden and you'll have the Father's joy.

This elder brother, he didn't have his father's burden. He had no idea. He had no concern about how the father felt. All the prodigal said, "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare." That elder brother saw there was a surplus in the house and an empty place at the table, and it didn't move him. It didn't put a twinge in his heart. You want joy in your Christian life? Well, my dear friend, you let the things that break the heart of Jesus break your heart until you pray and you see what God wants to do with you, and you let Him do it.

You see, can you imagine this elder brother saying, "You know, the barns are full and overflowing. The servants are working hard. There's bread enough and to spare. And yet my father has a broken heart. Dad, what's wrong? Dad, there's something wrong. There's something that's breaking your heart, Dad. What is it?" "Well, son, thank you for asking. It's your brother. It's your little brother. Son, he left home. He's been gone so long. Son, I haven't heard from him. Son, what good is all this farm, what good is this plantation, what good are all of these servants and these fine things when brother is away from home? Son, thank you for asking. Thank you for wanting to know my heart, son. Son, listen. Why don't you take a few days off from work? Maybe you could go and find out where he is, son. Maybe you could go down there and look for him. Maybe you could tell him that we miss him, and if he's done wrong, it's all right. I'll forgive him."

But, no. You see, this elder brother never knew his father's heart, because while he was doing service for the father, he wasn't spending time with the father. And because he wasn't spending time with the father, he never knew the father's burden. And because he never knew the father's burden, he never knew the father's joy when the prodigal son came home.

And those of you who don't have a love for souls, and those of you who are not a soul winner, and those of you who are nice, respectable, stay-at-home, work-in-the-church type of people, and yet you don't have a burning, blistering thirst to see the lost come to Jesus Christ, do you know what it tells me? It tells me you have not been spending time with the Father. You don't know the Father's heart. You don't know what

burdens the Father's heart. I am telling you, my dear friend, that your love for the Father is measured by your love for your brother. I am telling you that service to God is no substitute for fellowship with God. And I am telling you that you will never know the joy of the Lord until you know the burden of the Lord. And when you get the burden of the Lord, when you get the soul winner's burden, *"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."* Jesus said there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repents. (Luke 15:10)

My precious wife is a soul winner. She's a real soul winner. She loves people to Jesus. Recently, we had a family that came into the church through her ministry. A number of people in succession were baptized because of her quiet and steady and loving ministry. And I can tell you, each Sunday after one of them would walk the aisle, one of them would get baptized, Joyce would come home and she'd be so full of joy. Why full of joy? Because she knew the burden of the Father. And because she knew the burden of the Father, she knew the blessing of the Father.

There are people who get all upset during an evangelistic service or an evangelistic invitation. They don't like for us to go out and reach out. They say, "Well, we're fine just like we are." When we got ready to build a new, bigger building, one person is reported to have said, "I don't know what we need a bigger building for: I always get a seat." That's the attitude of the elder brother. He was miserable. There was a party going on, and he was on the outside. He was on a pout. He didn't have a burden for the lost. But, oh, what a respectable person he or she may be!

#### **IV. This "Nice" Kind of Sin Is the Easiest to Disguise**

I want to say fourthly that this kind of sin is the easiest to disguise; it's more easily disguised. Not the nasty sin. Oh, we all know what the nasty sins are. It's the nice sin that I'm talking about. You know, most of us, if we were to read this fifteenth chapter of Luke and see this story of two brothers, most people would say the worst sinner was which one? The one who lived with harlots, the one who wasted his substance in riotous living. But that's not the import of the story. If you read the story carefully, you're going to find out that the worst sinner was the one who didn't repent, the one who didn't get right.

Every human heart is wicked, but not all are apparently wicked. The Pharisee is able to cover up his sin with refinement, with culture, and with outward service and religion. Therefore there are a lot of Pharisees who sit in churches and they don't think that there's any real problem with them.

You know, if you read the book of Romans—and, by the way, the book of Romans is

a logical, legal, documentary; the constitution of Christianity is what it is—the Apostle Paul piece by piece deals with this. If you'll read Romans chapter 1, Paul in Romans chapter 1 talks about the nasty sinners. I mean, in Romans chapter 1, he talks about those people who are living in gross immorality and sexual perversion and he lays it out—and those people who are blatantly arrogant against God. But then in Romans chapter 2, he doesn't deal with the nasty sinner; he deals with the nice sinner. He deals with the religionist. He deals with that person who keeps all of the outward laws of religion and so forth. In Romans 1, he deals with the sins of the heathen. In Romans 2, he deals with the sins of the hypocrite. In Romans chapter 1, he deals with the prodigal son. In Romans chapter 2, he deals, as it were, with the elder brother. But then, when you get in Romans chapter 3, after he's dealt with the outward sinner, and the inward sinner, in Romans 3, he says, *"There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:22–23) We don't get drunk, and we don't do drugs, and don't commit adultery, and we don't do this, and we don't do that—and so we think we must be pretty good. And we even go to the church on Sunday night—and a lot of folks don't even do that. But, friend, we may be very much like this elder brother. We just simply suppress our sin. We're able to hide it.

You know what Jesus said about the Pharisees? Matthew chapter 23 and verse 27—listen to it. He said, *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward..."*—now, you know, a Jew didn't want to touch a grave or the burial place of a dead person, so they would take whitewash and they'd whitewash the tomb so you could see them. I mean, the reason for whitewashing them was not to make them beautiful but to make them stand out so you wouldn't accidentally touch or stumble upon it. But they would be gleaming and glistening in the sunlight, these white tombs. The Bible calls them *"whited sepulchres."* And Jesus said, "You Pharisees, you're just like those whited sepulchres"—*"which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness"* (Matthew 23:27)—outwardly beautiful, inwardly rotten.

Let me give you an example. How many of you know people who when they get angry just explode? I think we all know people like that. But how many people get angry and don't explode? They are full of bitterness. You never can tell it except that they're inwardly just full of acid. They're like this elder brother.

I enjoy watching the stewardesses on the airplanes. You know, they are taught to be nice to everybody. And I've watched some people just give them a fit over this little thing or that little thing, and they always smile. I think that smile is glued on. They just always smile. But I just imagine some of them going back there to the little galley back there and saying, "That old coot!" You know, I mean, they're just able. They're trained to keep

it in.

Now I think it's better to keep it in than to let it out, because I think that when you outwardly explode, it just leads to more anger and more excess. I'm not trying to say to let it out, but what I'm trying to say is that there is some sin that is far more easily hidden than others.

And perhaps it may be tonight that you're one of those nice sinners. You're one of those people like the elder brother: You say, "I love God," but you really don't love what God loves. You say, "I serve God," but you never know God's heart. You say, "I am a member of the church," but you don't have any joy. And everybody thinks you're just fine. But I'm telling you, if Jesus were talking to you tonight, He might just tell you a story called the story not of the prodigal son but of the elder brother.

## Conclusion

As we wrap this up, let me tell you, friend, if you've committed adultery, God will forgive you. If you're a thief, God will forgive you. If you're taken a human life, God will forgive you. If you've been sexually perverted, God will forgive you. If you have hurt and wounded those that you love, God will forgive you. And *"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."* (Isaiah 1:18) But let me say something else. If you've never been a drunkard; if you've never been a thief; if you've never been perverted; if you have lived a good, respectful life; if you don't get saved, you're going to die and go to hell. *There is no one so bad they cannot be saved, and no one so good they need not be saved.*

And this story tells the story of two sons, an outward sinner and an inward sinner; some guilty of the sins of the flesh, and some guilty of the sins of the spirit; some who are nasty, and some who are nice. But the wonderful part of this story is this: that the father who went out of the house to welcome the prodigal son home is the same father who went outside the house to welcome the elder brother back in. And the strange way that the story ends is this: with the prodigal son on the inside, and the elder brother on the outside. Wouldn't it be strange if some of the more vile, wicked people in this city go to heaven and you go to hell? *The devil had just as soon send you to hell from the pew as he had the gutter.* As a matter of fact, he would rather do it, because you're a better advertisement for him.

I've been putting the thing in the matter of whether you're saved or lost. But let's say that you are saved, and yet you've got a lot of the elder brother in you; you're saved, but there's no joy; you don't know the Father's heart; you don't know the burden of the Lord, therefore you don't know the joy of the Lord; you're really not concerned about those who are members of our church who are away from home who need to be reclaimed:

Would you ask God to lay some brother upon your heart, some sister upon your heart? I mean, how can we be here and enjoy all that we have when there are those who are away from home who are breaking the Father's heart? Would you ask God to speak to you, and say, "Lord, let me really know your heart. Let me forget all of this service that I am doing on this committee, or coaching this ball team, or driving this bus, or singing in this choir, or handling this property. Let me just forget all of that for a moment, Lord. And, Lord, look beyond those things to the things that really burden your heart."

# Sinners: Nasty and Nice

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 16, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 15:13–22

*“It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this my brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”*

LUKE 15:32

## Outline

Introduction

- I. We Must Measure Our Love for the Father by Our Love for Our Brother
- II. Service for God Is Never a Substitute for Fellowship with God
- III. You Cannot Enjoy the Father’s Blessings Without Sharing the Father’s Burdens
- IV. The Sins of the Spirit Are More Dangerous Than the Sins of the Flesh

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Luke chapter 15? Right away, you will recognize that as one of the monumental chapters in the Word of God, because it is the story of Jesus giving a parable to the Pharisees. Now the Pharisees were religious but self-righteous. They outwardly were fine; inwardly, they were rotten. They were on the road to hell. And Jesus said that publicans and sinners would get to heaven before these who are the counterpart of the straight-laced church member who’s never had an experience of the grace in their hearts and in their lives. They were religious but lost, and they needed to be saved. And tonight, we’re going to think about these and ask ourselves if perhaps there are some like that in the building tonight.

Now it will be very hard for those, if they are like that, to recognize that, because this kind of sin is so easily looked past as we look around at those other sinners. The title of the message: “Sinners: Nasty and Nice.” And Jesus said the nasty sinners will get to heaven before the nice ones. Jesus said the harlots and publicans will go into the kingdom before these others. (Matthew 21:31)

Now, Luke chapter 15, beginning in verse 11: *“And he said,”*—speaking of Jesus now—*“A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.”* That is, he went off to

the Las Vegas of that day, wherever it was—wine, women, and song—and he squandered his inheritance. *“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he”—the younger son—“began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he”—the citizen of that country— “sent him into his fields to feed swine.”* Now this was a Jewish audience. And a good, self-respecting Jew would not touch a pig with a ten-foot pole. And there he is in the hog pen with the swine. And now in the midst of his famine, his money all dissipated and gone, the Bible says in verse 16, *“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself...”*—and, thank God, he did— *“when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he”—that is, the elder brother— “was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.”* Notice in that one verse, *I, I, me, my.* *“But as soon as this thy son has come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this by brother was dead, and is alive again. and was lost, and is found.”* (Luke 15:11–32) That’s the way the story ends: with the younger brother on the inside, and the elder brother in a snit on the outside.

Now Jesus told this story to the Pharisees, in whom the milk of human kindness had curdled. It’s a story of two sinners. One sinner was a rebel. He was a renegade. He was a rioter. He ended up penniless, shameless, and friendless. And the other brother was different. He didn’t go away from home. As a matter of fact, he stayed at home. Outwardly, he was respectful. He was a hard worker and had been a devoted son. But

he somehow has the attitude of a Pharisee. Two brothers, two sinners: one nasty, and one nice. One was guilty of the sins of the flesh, wasting his substance with riotous living. One was guilty of sins of the spirit: bitterness, selfishness, arrogance, and resentment. One's sins were outward. One's sins were inward. One's sins were gross. The other's sins were subtle. But sinners, both of them.

Now most people who read the fifteenth chapter of Luke know the story of the prodigal son, the younger son, who left home. Very few people pay much attention to the story of the elder brother. But the truth of the matter is that the elder brother is the very crux of the story. This elder brother, who was at home, I think the reason that we ignore him is that he is so much like so many in our churches today. I would like to say this was a wonderful story, and it ends with these words: "and they lived happily ever after." But it doesn't end that way. It's a sad story. Now it's a love story, but the love that melted the heart of one of these brothers hardened the heart of the other brother. Failure softened one of the brothers, and success hardened the other of the brothers.

Now the elder brother, the one we're going to be thinking about tonight, outwardly, I say, he was moral. He had his little list of sins, his little list of do's and don'ts, things that he would not do and things that he did. But yet in spite of his little list of virtues, Jesus had compassion on the sinner that was nasty. And He would have had compassion on the sinner that was nice—but the sinner that was nice shut Him out, because he could not recognize his own sin.

Now I assume that most of us are Christians here tonight, but I'm afraid that even in the church we have Christians who have the attitude of Pharisees. We have some who are Pharisees who have never been born again. So I want to give you four principles, and I pray God that He'll write these four principles upon your heart as they come out of this story. And, by the way, there was never, never, never ever a teacher like the Lord Jesus Christ. His stories, His parables, were absolutely, incredibly pregnant with truth. And so I'm only going to draw four truths from many truths that we could draw tonight.

## **I. We Must Measure Our Love for the Father by Our Love for Our Brother**

Here's the first principle: We must measure our love for the Father by our love for our brother. Now, go back again to chapter 15, verse 25: "*Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh unto the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.*" (Luke 15:25) And then we go right on down to verse 30, and he is complaining: "*But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.*" (Luke 15:30)

It's very obvious that when he learned that his brother had returned home, he is not

at all enthused. He is not grateful. It is very plain that he has no love for his brother. As a matter of fact, he doesn't even say "my brother." He says, "*this thy son,*" not, "this, my brother." Now, put in your margin 1 John chapter 4 and verse 20, and listen to what the Apostle John said by divine inspiration: "*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:*"—and then John explains it—"for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20)

Now there are some who would like to assume the place of a son without assuming the responsibility of a brother. Do you know how God measures our love for Him? By our love for one another. It is so clear and so plain.

Many of you have been in restaurants and you've seen the old-fashioned urn of coffee. Generally, they're made of aluminum. They'll stand about a foot and a half tall if it's a truck stop. And on the outside there's a glass tube that runs right alongside that aluminum urn. You've seen what I'm talking about. There's a spigot at the bottom. And in that glass tube, which is clear, you can see the level of the coffee inside the big urn, and you can tell how much coffee is on the inside by the level on the glass tube, is that not right? All right now, if you want to know how much love that you have in your heart for God the Father, just look at the glass tube, which is the love that you have for your brother.

You would think that this elder brother would have said, "You mean, my brother has come home? Oh, praise God! Hallelujah! What a wonderful day. I've been praying for my brother. Boy, I wouldn't be surprised if Dad overdid it and celebrated, because I want to celebrate with him." You know, the truth of the matter is, I believe, that the elder brother, as you read the tone of this story, was actually jealous of the younger brother. "Here I am staying here working, doing all this work, and he's out there having a wonderful time." Like the people in prayer meeting in a little country church, a handful of them were down there at the front praying; one of them began to moan and pray and say, "O God, help us: we're down here praying in this prayer meeting while the rest of our folks out there in the world having a good time," that's the way this man was. He had no love for his brother. And, very frankly, the reason that he had no love for his brother is that he had no real love for his father, as we're going to see.

## **II. Service for God Is Never a Substitute for Fellowship with God**

So, principle number one: You measure your love for the Father by your love for your brother. And you cannot legitimately take the place and the blessings of a son without taking the place and the responsibility of a brother. That fits right in with what we had to say this morning about our place in the Father. Now here's the second principle that I want to lay on your heart—and we're talking to church folks tonight now—principle number two: Service for God is never a substitute for fellowship with God. Boy, do we

need to learn that! Now he begins to talk about all his service to the father. And if you will, look again in verse 29: *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.”* (Luke 15:29)

Now he had been serving his father and serving his father faithfully, but yet it's very obvious he was not in fellowship with his father. Outwardly, he was a model worker. Yet he missed the thing that was most important to the father. I mean, he might have said, “Boy, look how our farm is doing! Look at the orchard! It's full of fruit! Look at the fields! They're full of grain! Look at the barns! They're filled with plenty! This has been a wonderful year! We've done good! We've done great! Look how big everything is! I just don't understand Dad. Dad doesn't seem happy. Dad seems to have a faraway look in his eyes. Dad seems to be disturbed about something. What's wrong with Dad? Can't he see how prosperous we are? Doesn't he see how I've been serving him? As the elder son, I've managed the farm very well.”

You know, I wonder what God thinks when He looks at Bellevue Baptist Church. We say, “Lord, look at these buildings. God, did you check the Sunday School attendance lately? Lord, have you learned how we've organized our classes? Lord, have you seen how faithful we've been with our tithing? Hey, God, we're doing pretty good, aren't we? Oh, you're not pleased, Father? Father, can't you see what a great church we are? What's wrong, God? Don't you see how we're serving you?” But, you know, there are some people out there that we don't seem to be too concerned about. Did you know that? And that breaks the Father's heart.

Now I'm grateful for all the things we do. I'm grateful for the money that you give. I'm grateful for these beautiful buildings. I'm grateful for our choirs—few like them in the world. But that's no substitute for the thing that is greatest on the Father's heart—and that's bringing the lost to Jesus Christ. Now we can come in here and bask in our blessings and look around at all that we're doing. And we can be like the man over there in 2 Kings chapter 10, verse 16—old Jehu. I was reading this the other day in the Scripture. And he began to boast, *“And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD”*—“See what I do for God.” (2 Kings 10:16) That's one thing. But I think it would be better for us to be like that Samaritan harlot who got saved and she said in John chapter 4, verse 29, *“Come, see a man, which told me all things that I ever did.”* (John 4:29) One said, “Come see my zeal for the Lord.” The other said, “Come see my Lord, who's done so much for me.”

Now I wonder, those of us who serve the Lord here, is the motivation of our service for Him a love for Him? It is obvious that the elder brother was working, and working hard. But I can tell you he did not please the father. You know, he had the idea that if we serve, we ought to get rewarded for it. He was working for a reward. It's obvious.

Look in verse 29: *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid,”*—that is, a young goat—*“that I might [have a barbeque]”*—that is, “have my friends over and have a party.” He was saying, “Where’s the payoff?”

You know, there are people like this, who tithe because they think there’s going to be a payoff. And it pays to tithe. But if you tithe because it pays, I don’t think it will. Why do you tithe? Why do you bring your money here? Do you think you’re going to get God obligated to you? You need to put down 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 7: *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The man who serves for a reward is never really satisfied. He ends up complaining because he never thinks he gets enough. And he’s also upset if he thinks somebody else got more than he got. You see, God takes no pleasure in legalistic service. I’m not asking what you do. It was fine for this son to serve in the field. He should. And you should serve. The Bible says, “A son that sleeps in harvest is a shame to his father.” (Proverbs 10:5) But, you see, God measures our love for the Father by our love for our brother. And service to God is no substitute for fellowship with God. And it’s very obvious that this older brother, though he stayed home and was working laboriously, he never really knew the father’s heart. He was serving for a reward. It was legalistic service.

Again, another verse taken from the Old Testament. God chided His people, and here’s what He chided them for. Listen: *“Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.”* (Deuteronomy 28:47) Are you serving God with joyfulness and abundance of heart? Do you know why you serve is as important as your service? How many are singing in the choir tonight because they just can’t help but sing? Or how many of you are singing because somebody’s got to, and because Brother Whitmire’s going to get you if you don’t? Why? Why are you here tonight? Because it’s the thing to do? Or because you want to come?

You know, I’m disturbed that more people don’t come on Sunday night than do. And I’m grateful for this crowd. This crowd would overrun most church auditoriums in all of Tennessee. I’m grateful for that. But there are a lot of folks who are not here tonight. And that doesn’t bother me nearly as much as the fact that they don’t want to be here. They have no desire to be here. There are other things that are important to them. They say, “You know, I’ve had enough.”

A lady told Dr. Criswell at the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, where Phil Newberry used to serve—she was a member of another denomination, but she happened to visit on Sunday morning, and he invited the people back Sunday night—

she met him at the door and she said, “Dr. Criswell, in our church, we just go to church one time on Sunday. We don’t come on Sunday night. We’re free to do whatever we want on Sunday night.” And Dr. Criswell said in his typical sense of humor, “Well, if I had to listen to what you have to listen to on Sunday morning, once a Sunday would be enough for me.”

Why do we come on Sunday night? Because it’s the thing to do? Or because we want to come and give the whole day to Jesus, loving Him, serving Him, and praising Him? Service to God is no substitute for fellowship with God.

### **III. You Cannot Enjoy the Father’s Blessings Without Sharing the Father’s Burdens**

Now, here’s the third principle that I want to lay on your heart, and I pray that God will write it upon your heart: You cannot enjoy the Father’s blessings without sharing the Father’s burdens. Now many of us want the Father’s blessings. We want joy. And we wonder why we don’t have joy. Look again in chapter 15—let’s begin in verse 29: “*And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.*” It’s obvious he’s not making merry. “*But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have in thine.*” Boy, you would think he would enjoy his father’s blessings. He’s not enjoying it. I mean, he’s knee-deep in clover, and he’s unhappy, and he’s miserable. And the father goes on to say, “*It was meet*”—or “fitting”—“*that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*” (Luke 15:29–32) And there’s a party going on. But this elder son is not enjoying the party. He’s enjoying a pout. He’s not on the inside. He is on the outside.

Now, listen to this. If you’re a self-centered person—and there are many, many Baptists that I’ve met who are self-centered—a self-centered life never, never, never gives joy. Notice again in verse 29—look at it. He says *I* or *me* or *my* five times. He is full of self-righteousness. He is full of self-centeredness. He is full of self-pity. And he is perfectly miserable. And we have church members like that. I mean, they have all of the blessings of God, and yet they have no joy.

What an inheritance there was! This man was living, this elder son, obviously, in a very, very successful enterprise. And the prodigal son down in the hog pen said this: “Even the servants have bread enough and to spare.” (Luke 15:17) Not just the children, but there was such lavishness on this farm that even a servant had more than enough to share.

This elder brother was there, and the father in the parable, who represents God the

Father, said, “Look, it’s all yours.” You know, there’s enough of God’s infinite, marvelous, glorious grace for all six billion people on the face of the earth. And there’s enough grace—grace enough and to share.

But what causes the Father’s joy? What causes God joy? How would you like to bring joy to God? Well, it’s very obvious what brings joy to God. The Bible says there’s joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repents. (Luke 15:10) I’ve heard people say all the time, “All these angels are rejoicing.” That is not what it says. It is God who is rejoicing. There is joy in the presence of the angels. God the Father is filled with joy. Now, why is God filled with joy? Because a sinner has come home: “This, my son, has come home again.”

And do you want the Father’s joy? Would you like to have real joy—joy unspeakable, full of glory? (1 Peter 1:8) Would you like to transform your life from the mundane to the monotonous, and from the incidental to the monumental? Would you? Listen to this. Now there’s joy in heaven over one sinner that comes more than ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance. (Luke 15:7) And then the Bible says in the book of Psalms, *“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”* (Psalm 126:6)

Now this elder brother should have been concerned with a surplus in the house and an empty place at the table. Do you know what we ought to be concerned about? That we have this church building and sometimes on Sunday there are empty seats; that we have this amazing grace of God, and we’re surrounded by literally thousands of people who are lost, dying, and going to hell. And if you want joy, real joy, you let the concern of the Father be your concern, and you join the Father in bringing souls to Christ. And you’re going to find out that Sunday morning when souls get saved, or Sunday night when souls get saved, or when you’re out with EE, or evangelism, or your Sunday School class, or your day-to-day witnessing, and you see people coming to Jesus, your heart is going to be filled with joy.

I have no greater earthly joy, I do not believe, than to lead a soul to Jesus Christ. I found myself this morning when I saw these people coming down the aisle just praising God, I mean, just shouting, praising God, thinking about it, because these folks are coming, and there’s joy in heaven, and there ought to be joy in our hearts. But you cannot enjoy the Father’s blessing without enjoying the Father’s burden. You can come here in this church and see all that God is doing—and He’s doing a lot of stuff—and sit there with no joy, because you don’t have a burden for lost souls, and you don’t rejoice when souls come to Christ.

Why did this elder brother have no concern? Well, he didn’t know his father’s heart. He should have gone to his father. He could have said to his father, “Hey, Dad, what’s wrong? Hey, Dad, you look so burdened. There’s something wrong.” And the Dad could

have said, “Son, I’ll tell you what’s wrong: it’s your brother. You know, he wanted his inheritance early, and I gave it to him, and he left home. Son, I’m not even sure where he is. Son, why don’t you take some time off from the job? The farm is not the most important thing. Take some time off. Son, here’s some money. Would you go for me? Would you go to the big city and see if you can find your brother? Tell him I love him. Tell him we miss him. There’s a place for him at the table. Invite him to come home. Tell him Mama wants him to come home. See if he has any needs. Tell him that we long for him to come home.”

I want to ask you a very frank question—and I’m asking myself this question: How much time do we spend listening to the Father’s heart? This elder brother had not a clue as to the concern of the father. While he at the same time was pretending to serve the father, he was living surrounded by blessings: “All that I have is yours.” And yet he was miserable. You’re never going to enjoy Bellevue Baptist Church, you’re never going to enjoy any church, until you let the concern of the Father be your concern and you get in the stream of bringing men, women, boys, and girls to Jesus Christ. This man was self-centered; and because he was self-centered, he was miserable.

You know, these are the kinds of people who don’t love evangelism in a church. And, by the way, before long, we’re going to have seven successive Sundays of nothing but soul winning and evangelism. I’m going to be telling you about it later on. But, you know, there are some folks who’ll say, “Oh, man!” Just like the prodigal son, they’ll come to a service; you’re preaching and crying and pleading and praying for souls, and these people who’ve been starched and ironed but never washed, they’ll come in and they’ll look around, and they’ll be just like this elder brother. They’ll say, “What’s all this noise about?” While we’re pleading for sinners to come to Jesus, they’ll say, “Well, I like a worship service myself.”

I’ve told you this before. I never worship more than when souls are coming to Jesus. And if you would spend some time with the Father and listen to the Father’s heart and let the burden of the Father be your burden, then I’m going to tell you the blessings of the Father would be your blessings and you would have joy unspeakable and full of glory as you know the soul winner’s joy, for the Bible says, *“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”*

You know, in a way, I’m kind of glad that this elder brother did not accidentally meet the younger brother coming home. I believe that the elder brother would have been so—I can’t use the word I was about to use, not because it’s profane, but inelegant—toward his brother, that his younger brother may have said, “You know, I really don’t think I need to come back and be around him.”

Do you know what breaks my heart sometimes in this church? We have people who

come in here on Sunday morning and put books and coats and so forth in all these front rows to save a seat down front. That's not altogether bad. As a matter of fact, I'm glad you want to be down near the front. That's good to get as close to the front as you can. I found out that my grades in college would go up almost a whole letter if I would get close to the front, not that much disturbance between myself and the professor. And, you know, the further in the back that you get, the more you're tempted to talk and pass notes and to kind of be out of the service. It's good to get down by the spout where the glory comes out. But—and this has happened in our church—I have seen guests come, maybe move a book that somebody put there, or move a coat, and sit down because there was an empty seat, and our members would come and say, "I'm sorry. That's my seat. Would you get up?" God have mercy! God have mercy! God have mercy! Do you know what that is? That's the sin of a selfish, self-righteous, self-centered Pharisee, more concerned about his seat than some precious soul that may be hell-bound and burn in hell forever who has come to hear the Word of God.

Friend, we ought to be willing to sit outside to let somebody come and hear the Word of God. And we've got to make folks welcome here. And God has filled this church with blessings. And the Father said to us, "All that I have is yours." You cannot, however, enjoy the Father's blessing without sharing the Father's burden. We need to hear the heart of God. Think how much potentially belonged to this man. First of all, your privilege: "a son." Your position: "you're with me." Your possessions: "all that I have." Yet with all of that, he was miserable, because he did not share the Father's heart.

Are you upset with God's love to somebody else? Does it make any difference to you if God loves sinners if they don't look exactly like we look? Maybe they're not dressed in what you think is appropriate. Maybe they have facial hair that you don't appreciate or are wearing jewelry stuck in different parts of their body. "What is he doing here? What is she doing here?" Do you know why they crucified Jesus? Because He kept company with sinners. We need to have a heart. I'm not saying that we need to try to become like them, but we need to love them so that they can come and share the blessings of Almighty God. When you enter into the Father's burden, I can tell you you'll enter into the Father's blessing and the Father's joy.

#### **IV. The Sins of the Spirit Are More Dangerous Than the Sins of the Flesh**

Now, here's the fourth principle I want to lay upon your heart: The sins of the spirit are more dangerous than the sins of the flesh. This elder son was so full of self-righteousness. He had no idea that he was a sinner also. He looked down his self-righteous nose at this younger son: "*this thy son.*" And many of us, when we read this fifteenth chapter of Luke, we think that the sins of the prodigal son are far worse than

the sins of the elder brother.

Now, let me say this about the human heart: All human hearts are wicked. Some are just more apparently wicked than others. You know, the Pharisees are able to cover their sin by refinement and by culture and by religious practices. And before you criticize one of these “old sinners,” you might consider that if you had the same background, if you had the same upbringing, or had not had the opportunities and the training and the culture that you have, you might be very much like them; your life might not be very much different from those that we’re prone to judge.

Read Romans chapter 1 and then chapter 2. In Romans chapter 1, Paul is dealing with the rebellious sinner. In Romans chapter 2, Paul is dealing with the religious sinner. In Romans chapter 1, he’s dealing with the down and out. In Romans chapter 2, he’s dealing with the up and out. And in Romans chapter 3, he’s dealing with both. And he says, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) That is his conclusion: we are all sinners.

Now it’s easy for some, like Pharisees and people who dress up in their glad rags on Sunday morning—and I like to see you look nice—but they come to church, they give the invitation, and they’ll look around to see if any of those old sinners are going to go down there and get saved. And they themselves are so filled with self-righteousness. And Jesus said, *“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:20) And He says, *“As a matter of fact, harlots and crooked tax collectors are going to heaven before you do.”* (Matthew 21:31) But the problem with the sins of the spirit is that they are so hard to recognize and they are so easy to camouflage.

You know, we suppress sin sometimes, and we think that is victory—and the problem is still on the inside. This is what Jesus said to these people like this elder brother. You might put it in your margin—Matthew chapter 23 and verse 27: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres.”* Back in this day, for the Jews, of course, you would be ceremonially unclean if you touched a grave. So they would take a sepulcher, which is a grave, a tomb, and they would whitewash it. It would stand out gleaming in the noonday sun. Now even though it was a tomb, it was beautiful: a whited sepulcher, snow white. And this is what He says to these people: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness”* (Matthew 23:27)—outwardly white, beautiful; inwardly full of putrefaction and decay.

There are the sins of the flesh. Have you ever seen people just explode with anger? *One man went in the golf store and said, “I need a new putter.” And the salesman said, “Well, what was wrong with the old one?” He said, “It didn’t float!”* There are some

people who just explode with anger. And there are other people, they are so cultured they can keep it in. One is not any better than the other. **Have you watched these airline stewardesses?** “Yes sir.” “No sir.” “More coffee, sir?” “I’m sorry, sir.” “Thank you, sir.” I imagine they go back there to the galley and say, “That old coot!”

**Somebody was playing golf with a pastor and he said, “Pastor, I just admire you. Other people, they miss a shot like you just missed and they’re liable to say something bad. You didn’t say a word.” He said, “Yeah, I know it. But if you’ll watch where I spit, the grass never grows again.” You can contain it, but that doesn’t mean it’s not there.**

Outwardly like a whited sepulcher; inwardly full of dead men’s bones. What is the point? The sins of the spirit are even more dangerous than the sins of the flesh, because there is at least a benefit and a bliss to being a drunkard. The drunkard says, “I’m a drunkard.” But so many people wrap their robes of self-righteousness about them and never realize that they’re eaten alive with the sins of a Pharisee.

## **Conclusion**

Now, here’s the conclusion—and I’m finished: The father’s love was the same for both sons. He didn’t love the younger son more than he loved the elder son. He loved both sons. He welcomed the younger son and entreated the elder son. Yet the story ends with the younger son having committed the sins of the flesh on the inside, and the self-righteous, self-centered older brother on the outside. And do you know what this says to me? It says, “Adrian, you need to examine your own life.” And I’m going to tell you this: This story tonight has brought me under conviction. And you are saved perhaps, but we all need to ask ourselves this question: Is there a little Pharisee in me? Do I have a little bit of the spirit of the elder brother? How much do I love God?

Well, I can measure my love for God by my love for my brother. And I cannot share the Father’s blessings without sharing the Father’s burden. And I need to be very, very careful lest I think through culture and refinement that I am okay. And I need to watch and ask myself if I think that my service for God is a substitute for my concern for the things that break the Father’s heart. Am I really, really burdened for the lost?

I want to plead with you, church—I mean, plead from my heart: We are an island of plenty in an ocean of need, and I as your pastor am telling you, commissioning you, calling you, pleading with you, challenging you, and charging you that you get a burden on your heart, the Father’s burden. How would you feel if one of your own dear children were away from home? That’s the way the Father feels. That’s what this story is all about. God give us a burden for souls! May God awaken in my own heart a new burden for souls, and may the things that break the heart of God break my heart! And may the things that give Him joy, may they give me joy! Would you covenant with me that we are going to make our church a welcoming station for the lost? And when they come, and

when souls get saved and multitudes are won, we'll have a party; I mean, we'll just enjoy it when souls are coming. And there is joy in heaven. There will be joy down here as people are coming to Jesus.

# The Ungrateful Brother

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 27, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 15:11–32**

## Outline

Introduction

I. You May Measure Your Love for the Father by Your Relationship with Your Brother

II. You May Measure Your Service to the Father by Your Fellowship with the Father

III. You May Measure Your Joy with the Father by Your Sharing of the Father's Burden

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, would you take God's Word, please, and turn to Luke chapter 15. And as we tune our hearts for this fellowship supper at the Lord's Table, I want us to do some self-examination, and I want us to examine our faith. And I'm going to give you three measurements so you can find out about your relationship with God and your readiness to come to our Lord's Table.

Now, this is a time of celebration, but some of us are not ready to celebrate. I want us to read here in Luke chapter 15, and I begin reading in verse 11—I suppose one of the most familiar stories in all of the Bible: *“And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself...”*—and I like that phrase because it implies that a person away from God is really not in his right mind— *“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a*

*great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry,”—that is, the elder brother was angry—“and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. And it was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” (Luke 15:11–32)*

Now, this story is a story that Jesus Christ gave to the Pharisees—the Pharisees in whose hearts and lives the milk of human kindness had curdled. They had complained about the Lord Jesus Christ and they criticized Jesus for keeping company with sinners. And Jesus told this story. It’s a story of two sons and two kinds of sinners. One story, the story we’re very familiar with, is the story of the prodigal, the prodigal son. He was a rebel. He was a renegade. He was a rioter. He ended up penniless. He ended up shameless. He ended up friendless. Someone preached a message on this prodigal son and gave three points: first of all, sick of home; then, homesick; and then, home. It’s a beautiful story. And I think everybody knows it. His were the sins of the flesh. But there was another son, a son that stayed at home. Outwardly, he was a fine son. He worked hard. He kept his father’s commandments outwardly. He did nothing wrong that anyone could obviously see. And his were not the sins of the flesh. His were more the sins of the crowd that’s here tonight. His were the sins of the spirit.

You see, there are some sins that are outward, and there are some sins that are inward. There are some sins that are sins of the flesh, but other sins that are sins of the spirit. There are some sins that are gross sins. There are other sins that are subtle sins. People pay more attention to the prodigal son than they do the elder brother. And you know why we don’t pay much attention to the elder brother, and why you don’t hear many sermons about the elder brother, the brother that stayed home and complained

about the younger brother who'd been away—complained when the father lavished his love upon that younger brother? I'll tell you why: because we're so much like the elder brother. It's a love story, this fifteenth chapter of Luke, but you're going to find out that the love of God that melted the heart of one sinner hardened the heart of another sinner. The elder brother was outwardly moral, but Jesus in this story made havoc of his little list of virtues. And you're going to find out that Jesus had compassion for that outward sinner, that man who was guilty of the sins of the flesh; but you're going to find out in the Scriptures that Jesus had white-hot words for those who were self-righteous, those who were guilty of sins of the spirit and would not let go of those sins of the spirit.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, as we prepare our hearts tonight for the Lord's Supper, let me tell you how our lives ought to be lived. First of all, there ought to be a pure, sincere, overflowing love for God. That love for God ought to lead to service for our Lord. And that service for our Lord ought to lead to great, wonderful, abounding joy. Love, service, and joy ought to mark our lives. Well, I want you to measure tonight your love for God, and I want you tonight to measure your service for God, and I want you tonight to measure your joy in the Lord. And may I tell you several things.

## **I. You May Measure Your Love for the Father by Your Relationship with Your Brother**

First of all, you may measure your love for the Father by your relationship with your brother—you may measure your love for the Father by your relationship with your brother. Put this verse in your margin—1 John 4:20. Here's what the wise Apostle John said: *"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar..."*—boy, there's one thing about old John: he didn't beat around the bush, did he?—*"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"* (1 John 4:20)

Now, there are some who would like to assume the place of a son without assuming the responsibility of a brother. And I'm going to tell you that you're not ready tonight to take the Lord's Supper if your heart is headquarters for hate for some brother, some sister, some child of God. I'm going to tell you again, if you have resentment or envy or jealousy or hatred or malice or contempt for your brother, your sister, I warn you, do not partake of the Lord's Supper until you've confessed that sin, for you are not right with God. How are you going to measure your love for God?

**My dear friend, you're going to measure your love for the Father by your love for the brother. You see, you can't see God the Father, but you can see your brother. And so, in a very practical way, that which we can see is that which we can measure. Downstairs in our church kitchen, and many church kitchens, we have big coffee urns.**

They put the coffee or whatever the beverage is on the inside, and on the outside there's a glass tube that runs up and down, and you can tell what's on the inside by looking at that glass tube that's transparent, and as the liquid goes up and down in that glass tube. Do you know what I'm talking about? You know what's on the inside. You can't see what's on the inside, but you can see what's on the outside. And, my dear friend, your love for your brother is that which can be seen, which is the absolute measurement of what is on the inside.

Now you would have thought that this elder son who was out in the field, when he came home and saw that they had killed the fatted calf, they were having a party, they were dancing, they were making merry, you would have thought he would have said, "Praise God! Hallelujah! Our prayers have been answered! My brother has come home! What a wonderful day! I wouldn't blame my dear old dad if he overdid the festivities just a little bit." But he wasn't that way. As a matter of fact, he was such a poor son because he was such a poor brother.

Do you know what I have in my mind? I really believe that this elder brother was a little bit jealous of the good time he thought the prodigal son had been having. He was just a little envious of those people who were doing things that he really didn't get a chance to do. He was like that woman who prayed in a prayer meeting when there were only a few in the prayer meeting: "Lord, be with us as we meet here with you while so many of our members are out there in the world having a good time." You know, this is the way he felt.

And I'm telling you, dear friend, you may measure your love for your Father by your love for your brother. *"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"*

## **II. You May Measure Your Service to the Father by Your Fellowship with the Father**

Now, there's a second thing: You may measure your service to the Father by your fellowship with the Father. Look, if you will, in verse 25: *"Now his elder son was in the field:"*—that is, he hadn't been wasting his substance with riotous living. He was out in the field. He's working the ranch. He's working the farm. He's taking care of the flock, whatever it is. He's in the field—*"and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound."* Now, watch this. *"And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him."* Now,

watch verse 29: *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid,”*—that is, a young goat—*“that I might make merry with my friends.”* (Luke 15:25–29)

Now, he’s interested here in his service. And it’s very obvious that he was a hard worker. He was in the field. And he says to his father and he reminds his father in verse 29, “I have served you for many years.” But, my dear friend, you may measure your service for the Father by your fellowship with the Father. There are people who have worked in this church for many, many years, but they don’t have fellowship with God. This man, this elder brother, was what we would have considered a model worker. And yet he did not know the father’s heart. He did not understand what motivated his father.

I can just almost hear his mind working. He’s saying, “You know, I don’t understand what’s wrong with my dad. We’ve never had finer crops. Look at the cattle—how sleek and fat they are! Look at the barns—how freshly painted, how large, how wonderful they are! Look at all of the workers we have coming and going! Everything looks just so fine. I don’t know what’s wrong with my father. My father just seems to sit there. He never seems to be completely satisfied, no matter how wonderful the farm is, no matter how beautiful everything is. My father seems to have a faraway look in his eyes. I don’t know what’s wrong with my father.”

I’ll tell you what was wrong with the father. He had a broken heart over a son that was away from home, over that fallen friend that we talked about this morning. I want to ask you a question. What do you think God is concerned about primarily tonight? Do you think God is primarily concerned about a building we call Canaan? Do you think God is primarily concerned about several hundred in the choir, great orchestras, banners, love offerings, deacons, sermons, fellowship, church suppers, ordinations, and Sunday School attendance? There are some people who think, “Well, you know, God ought to really be pleased with what we’re doing for Him. Look at the way we’re running His farm.” But I wonder, have we really entered into the great heart of God?

You see, dear friend, here was a man who was serving God without ever really knowing the heart of God. It was simply legalistic service. Do you know what he was thinking? He was saying, “God...”—actually to his father, but the father here takes the place of God; He was saying, “Father, I have served you, and you haven’t rewarded me correspondingly.” It’s very obvious here that here was a man who was serving for a reward. His service was legalistic service, and he missed his father’s heart.

You see, the Bible says, for example, about giving, in 2 Corinthians 9:7, *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:7) I told you then what I’ll tell you

again: *What is not cheerfully, willingly, given, God neither needs nor wants.* We're to give out of a heart motivated with love. You may measure your service to the Father by your fellowship with the Father. If, my dear friend, you serve for reward, it's not going to be long before you're going to be complaining that you're not being blessed sufficiently. And if somebody else is blessed more than you're blessed, you're really going to be complaining. But if you serve the Lord out of a love for God, not out of reward, you're going to be blessed indeed. Listen. This young man did not know what made his father's heart beat. He could have known. He should have known. But he didn't.

### **III. You May Measure Your Joy with the Father by Your Sharing of the Father's Burden**

I'm going to mention one other thing, dear friend. Not only are you going to measure your love for the Father by your relationship to your brother; not only are you going to measure your service for the Father by, dear friend, your fellowship with the Father; but you're going to measure also that third thing that I mentioned: your joy with the Father by your sharing of the Father's burden. Notice again in verse 29. Listen to this man: *"And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid..."*—do you see his finger in the face of his father?—*"yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."* That is, "I'm not merry; I'm not happy." *"But as soon as this thy son was come..."*—do you hear that? Not "this my brother," but "this thy son"—*"But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."* (Luke 15:29–32)

But the elder brother didn't make merry. The elder brother was not glad. He had no joy, because, dear friend, he's wrapped up in himself. He doesn't have the father's burden. Look in verse 29. He's not concerned about his father. In verse 29 he says "I," "me," five times. He is full of self-righteousness. He is full of self-centeredness. He is full of self-pity. And he is perfectly miserable. And so will you be if you don't know the Father's burden.

My dear friend, listen to me tonight. If you do not share the Father's burden, you'll never know the Father's joy. Now, pay attention. If you do not love your brother, you don't love the Father. If you don't have fellowship with the Father, your service amounts to nothing. And if you don't have the Father's burden, you'll never know the Father's joy.

Now he had it all, but he had nothing. Look, if you will, as the father reasons with

him. Look in verse 31—the father said unto him, “*Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*” Now, look at it. He has everything, and yet the one thing he wants the most, he doesn’t have—and that’s joy. He had position, because he was a son. Look at it. He calls him a son. He has privilege, because he’s with the father. He has possessions, because the father says, “All that I have is yours.” Now, in Bible times, the elder son got two-thirds of the inheritance, the birthright. The younger son got only one-third. Everything that was left really belonged to the elder son. The father said, “Son, listen. You have position. You’re my son. You have privilege. You’re with me. You have possessions. All that I have is yours.” And yet, he had no joy. And I’ll tell you why. The same reason that some in this building tonight say, “I just don’t understand why it is that I’m not getting joy in my faith.” Well, I’ll tell you why. You don’t share the Father’s burden. You don’t see things from God’s point of view. You feel that somehow somebody else’s blessing is your demise.

Now, what this young man needed to understand was that in the father’s house there is always a surplus. The prodigal son knew that. He said, “Even my father’s servants have bread enough and to spare.” (Luke 15:17) My dear friend, there’s enough of God’s grace for all five billion people on Planet Earth. You can have all you want, and they can have all they want. What brings the Father joy? What makes joy in heaven? Again, what burdens the Father’s heart? A son away from Him. What gladdens the Father’s heart? Listen—Jesus said, “There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7, 10)

I used to think that meant that the angels rejoiced—and I suppose they do—but that’s not what that verse means. It doesn’t say there’s joy among the angels. It says there’s joy in the presence of the angels. It’s the Lord who rejoices when a sinner comes home. There’s joy in the presence of the angels, just as there was joy when this prodigal son came home. What gives the Father joy? For sinners to come home. What will give you joy? “*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*” (Psalm 126:6)

My friend, do you want joy? If you want the Father’s joy, you’ve got to share the Father’s concern. You’ve got to share the Father’s burden. This elder brother could have been concerned with a surplus in the house and an empty place at the table, and yet there was no twinge in his heart. Have you ever thought about why he didn’t share his father’s concern? Why was he so stubborn, so recalcitrant, so mulish? Why didn’t he know how the father felt? I’ll tell you why. He spent no time with his father. Do you know what he should have done? He should have said, “Dad, I want to talk with you. Dad, you’ve got a faraway look in your eye. Dad, I can tell you’re burdened. Dad, even

though the crops are doing well, and even though the servants are obedient, and even though the barns are well built, and even though the cattle are sleek and healthy, and everything good, father, I can tell you're burdened. Level with me, Dad. Why do you look so burdened?" And the dad would say, "Son, it's your brother. You know, son, he wanted his inheritance early, and I gave it to him. And your brother's left home. I believe he's in a faraway country. I believe he may be in trouble. I hear there's a depression in that land where he went. I'm concerned about your brother. Let's pray for him. Perhaps, son, you could go and see where he is, see if he has any needs. Perhaps, son, you could go to your brother and my son and tell him that mother and I love him, and that you love him, and that you want him to come home, and that we want him to come home. Welcome him home." He never spent any time with his father. He didn't know his father's heart.

Do you know why people don't have a love for the lost? Because they don't have a quiet time with God. Did you know it's not primarily a love for lost souls that we need; it's primarily a love for God that we need. Jesus didn't say, "Do you love sheep?" or, "Do you love to feed sheep?" He said to Peter, "Loveth thou me? Feed my sheep." But here was a son who spent no real time, no quality time. What he did, he shut out the concern of his father while pretending to serve his father. He was self-centered and he was miserable. He came home and he said, "What's all this noise about?" They said, "Well, your brother's come home, and there's rejoicing."

Did you know in churches across America today there are people who don't want to be a member of an evangelistic church? Do you know why? It bothers them. They wish the preacher would just preach and let them go home. They don't like a man to stand in the pulpit and say, "Come to Jesus. Sing another stanza. Sing another stanza. Sing another stanza." They get antsy. They look at their watch. They say, "It's time to go. What's all this noise about? It disturbs me. Everything is fine just like it is. We don't need a new church. There's plenty of room for me. I always get a seat. What's all this noise about? What's all this concern about? What's all this pleading and praying about?"

Frankly, I'm glad that the elder brother didn't meet the prodigal coming home. I'm glad it was the father who met him. Sometimes I wonder about some of the unsaved who come and sit in our church by some of our people. Do you know what can happen in Bellevue Baptist Church—and it has happened? I have gotten letters from unsaved people who came to our church and were not able to sit down, because somebody said, "That is my seat. Didn't you see that Bible there? That's mine. Move out." May God have mercy upon your wretched soul! Your seat? My dear friend, there's plenty of room in our Father's house. May God give you a concern for these poor people!

You say, “Well, I don’t want to sit near that person: they don’t smell right,” or, “they don’t look right.” I’m so glad the elder brother, that self-righteous little prig, didn’t meet the prodigal on his way home. My dear friend, you want joy, real joy? You spend some time with the Father. You find out what burdens the Father and let that burden you. There was joy. There was singing. There was gladness. That self-righteous Pharisee was on the outside and wouldn’t come in.

## **Conclusion**

Before we take the Lord’s Supper tonight, I want you to learn three things and learn them good. The Christian life is summed up in love for the Father, service to the Father, and joy with the Father. Your love for the Father is going to be measured by your love for your brother. Your service to the Father is going to be measured by your fellowship with the Father. And your joy with the Father is measured by the degree that you share the Father’s burden. “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psalm 126:6)

Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. I want you tonight to tune your heart and ask the Lord, “Lord, have I been serving you legalistically? Lord, has my so-called service for you been a substitute for my fellowship with you? Have I been pretending to love you when I haven’t loved those that you love? Is the lack of joy in my life, Lord, the fact that I’ve not entered into your burden?” Friend, when we learn to weep with Him, we’ll learn to rejoice with Him. Spend a few moments, then I’ll lead us in prayer and we’ll prepare our hearts for this Lord’s Supper.

# Lord of All Your Wealth

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 29, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 16:1–3**

*“And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.”*

LUKE 16:1

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Do You Love Money? The Trust Test
- B. Do You Love Money? The Priority Test
- C. Do You Love Money? The Admiration Test
- I. God Is Interested in How You Secure Money
  - A. Don't Secure Your Money at Too High a Price
  - B. Don't Make Money in Any Manner Contrary to the Laws of God or the Laws of Man
- II. God Is Interested in How You Save Money
- III. God Is Interested in How You Spend Your Money
  - A. Beware of Credit Buying
  - B. Beware of Impulse Buying
  - C. Beware of Ego Buying

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Luke chapter sixteen, would you please—Luke chapter sixteen. We're going to read and share together one of the most enigmatic and hard to understand parables, I believe, in all the Word of God, and yet one that has an incredible blessing for us. Luke chapter sixteen, as we are continuing our study, "Lord of our Wealth."

May I say to you very plainly and candidly, that when you took Jesus Christ as your Savior, you took Jesus Christ as your Lord. And when you took Jesus Christ as your Lord, He became Lord of "a double I." He became Lord of all. And when He became Lord of all, that means He became Lord of all your wealth, amen? Became Lord of all your wealth.

And so, the Lord is interested and has much to say about how you secure your money. He has much to say about how you save your money. He has much to say about how you spend your money. And He has much to say about how you share your

money. Now, this is really for your own welfare and not for God's. God doesn't need anything. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. He said, if I were hungry, I wouldn't ask you for anything.

And may I say on the other hand that the Bible does not condemn money as being something evil. We often hear people say, well, money is the root of all evil. There's just one thing wrong with that—it's not true. The Bible never says that money is the root of all evil. The Bible says the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

Now, wealth in itself is not evil, because God created it. God says the silver is mine, the gold is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills are mine. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. And if it's evil, then God is evil, because He possesses it. It is all God's. But 1 Timothy chapter six, and verse ten says, "For the love of money is the root of all evil." And some translators give it this way, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, "which, while some covet after, they have erred from the faith and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Money rightly used, can be in the hands of a believer can be food for the hungry, it can be drink for the thirsty, it can be clothing for the needy.

Now, I want you to look at this parable, therefore, and let's see what our Lord has to say about our stewardship. "And he said also unto his disciples, there was a certain rich man which had a steward. And the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship." And just underscore that phrase, because my dear friend, one of these days and perhaps sooner than we realize, we are going to stand before God and He is going to ask us to do exactly the same thing: to give an account of our stewardship. "For thou mayest no longer be steward. Then the steward said unto himself, What shall I do? For my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship I cannot dig".

That is, maybe he is too weak and feeble, for whatever reason, he is not going to be a laborer. "To beg I am ashamed." He wasn't ashamed to steal but he was ashamed to beg. "So I'm resolved what to do. When I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me unto their houses. So he called every one of his Lord's debtors unto him and said unto the first, how much owest thou my Lord? And he said a hundred measures of oil. He said unto him, take thy bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty."

Now you see what this steward is doing. This man is getting into cahoots with the debtors to his master. In verse seven, "And he said unto another, how much owest thou? And he said, a hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, take thy bill, and write fourscore." That would be eighty. And verse eight. "And the Lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely for the children in this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

Now, that's the key verse, we'll come back to it in just a moment. "And I say unto you," Jesus says unto you, "Make yourselves of the mammon of unrighteousness that when ye fail, they", the friends, "may receive you in everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful to that which is another man's who shall give you that which is your own?"

Now, I said this was a strange parable. Here was a man who had been stealing from his master. His master finds out about it and says you can no longer be the manager of my company. You can no longer be my steward. You are going to be fired. Now this man had a few weeks before he actually got off the job so he says, now what am I going to do? I've got to make things right for the future; I've got to have someone to take care of me. I can't do manual labor. I'm not going to beg. I'll just continue to steal.

So he went out and found those who owed his master money and he said to them, how much do you owe my boss? And he said well, I owe him a hundred measures of oil. And he said, I'll tell you what. Just put on the bill fifty. And then you and I we'll take care of the other fifty together. We'll split. And then he asked another one, how much do you owe? And he said I owe a hundred measures of wheat. He said well, write down eighty, and between the two of us, we'll take care of the other twenty.

Now, what he was doing, he was just making plans for the future. Now, his master found out about it, how he found out about it I don't know. But verse eight is the key verse. Now look at it. This has caused a lot of consternation to a lot of people. "And the Lord committed the unjust steward." Now when it says lord, it's small l. It's not talking about Jesus, it's talking about boss in this parable. The boss commended the unjust steward.

Now when the Bible says he commended him, it doesn't mean that he was pleased with him, he's just giving the devil his due. Because he had done wisely. Now the word wisely there does not have the idea of godly wisdom, but shrewdness. For the children of Israel were in their generation wiser than the children of light. Now what this was—this was a shrewd dude. This man, this bookkeeper, this accountant, he was just taking care of himself. And when his boss found out what he had done, he said, well, you know, he is a slick rascal. You've really got to give him credit. I mean this was a pretty slick thing that he did. He's taking care of himself; he's taking care of the future. And his boss just had to kind of step back and take off his hat and give the devil his due.

Now, don't for one skinny minute think that the Lord in this parable is commending anybody for being dishonest—not at all. But what He is saying is this man had certain proclivities in his life, certain abilities, certain foresight, that the children of heaven need. Sometimes the children of this world think more about the future than those of us who

are saved. Here was a man who was thinking out in the future. Here was a man who was planning for the future. And many times those of us who are children of God, do not do so; we do not think out into the future.

Now, we're to be wise as serpents, but were not to be like serpents, and nobody says that we'd be wise as serpents, that He didn't follow that upward saying, that we are to be harmless as doves. But there is a certain world of wisdom that this man had that sometimes the children of this world need.

Now, what he was saying was this. I cannot I cannot stay in this job the rest of my life. I've got to take care of the future. So when I leave this work. These friends, that I have helped to cheat my boss they are going to receive me into their homes. He's looking forward to the future. And then Jesus says, I'm going to tell you what you ought to do. You ought to take your money and invest your money so that when you die there will be people who will receive you into heaven. That's what He's talking about. So there will be a welcome committee waiting for you there in heaven.

How many of you have heard somebody say, well you can't take it with you? Well, that is true, but I tell you what you can do. You can send it on ahead. You say, how can you send it on ahead? Well, you can invest your money in the only thing going to heaven, and what's the only thing going to heaven? The souls of men. So, when you invest your money in the souls of men and people going to heaven, then what you've done, you've just sent it on ahead, and when you get to heaven they will be there to welcome you and say thank you for giving to the Lord as we saw the other day in that wonderful dramatic presentation. That's what this parable is talking about.

Make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness so when you die, when you fail, they may receive you into heavenly habitations. There will be a welcome committee there waiting for you.

I heard about a man that decided that he would try to take it with him, you know? We say you can't take it with him, but he thought he would try. So he was sick and dying and told his wife, I don't know, it's worth a chance, it's really the best thing I know. I'm going to put all my money in a jug with a big handle and I'm going to put it in the attic. And when I die, on my way to heaven, I'm going to snatch that jug and see if I can take it with me. And his wife said I don't think that will work, and he said, well, it's worth a try. So he put all of his money in a big jug with a handle, put it in the attic, and he died and after he died, and the undertaker came, his wife thought, well, I'll just go up in the attic and check. And she went up in the attic and checked and the jug was still there. And she thought, well, maybe he should have put it in the basement. The truth of the matter is, that you can't you can't take it with you. But this parable teaches that you can send it ahead. Make friends, with the mammon of unrighteousness, so that when you fail, when you die, they, the welcome committee, will receive you into heaven.

Now, the Lord, not only tells us that we can send our money on ahead, but He also teaches us that the measure as to how much God will trust us is measured by what we do with our money. Look in verse ten if you will of this chapter. Look at it very clearly. Now, He says in verse nine He says, you can send it on ahead.

But now look in verse ten. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Now, what is the least, and what is the much? The least is your financial matters. The much is your spiritual matters.

Now, what He is saying is this. If God cannot trust you with financial matters, God cannot trust you with spiritual riches. Now, look at it very clearly. He says, in verse eleven, "If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, if you're not faithful with your salary, who will commit to your trust the true riches? You see, my dear friend, the true riches are not what you have in the bank. If you want to know how rich you are, you add up everything that you have that money cannot buy and debts cannot take away. Okay? To find out how rich you are, you add up everything that you have that money cannot buy and debts cannot take away, and that is the true riches.

Now, Jesus said, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, that is, your salary, the things that you think you own, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you've not been faithful in that which is another man's, or another's, literally, is what this means. You see, you don't own it anyway. God owns it all. If you have not been faithful with your money, who shall give you that which is your own?

Now, what He is saying is this. How you handle your finances is an index how you would handle spiritual riches. Do you know the reason that some of us are not richer spiritually than we are? We have not been faithful with our money. How many of you would like more love, more faith, more power, more wisdom, more assurance.

Well may I tell you very frankly the reason you don't have it? Is because your not been faithful in your money. God has been withholding blessings from many a man and many a woman because that person has been unfaithful with his money. And if God cannot trust you with his money, how can He trust you with a greater spiritual riches? That's what Jesus is teaching. Listen, friend. You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.

The second thing He's teaching is this. If I can't trust you with the material things of this world, how do you think I'm going to trust you with the true riches? How do you think I'm going to trust you with true spiritual riches? If we've been unfaithful in the less, than we'll be unfaithful in the greater. He warns us therefore about loving money. I told you in the introduction of this message that the Bible doesn't say that it is wrong to have wealth, that wealth in itself is not evil. It is the love of money which is the root of all evil.

And notice what He says here about loving money that you cannot love money.

Verse thirteen. "No servant can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other. Or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." You cannot serve God and mammon.

Now make up your mind. If your money is not under the lordship of Christ, than Christ is not Lord of all. Jesus Christ is not some sort of a part time king living in a duplex. No, no, no, no. My dear friend, either He is Lord of all, or He's not lord at all, you cannot serve God and mammon. Mammon is the word here for money or material riches.

Let me ask you a question. Is the love of money a problem in your heart? You say, no, man, I'm very poor. Some of the poorest people in the world are infected with the love of money. And some of the richest people don't have the love of money. Is the love of money a problem in your life? Let me give you some tests. Very quickly, you ready to take the test and find out if you have the love of money?

#### **A. Do You Love Money? The Trust Test**

The first thing is the trust test. Do you find yourself thinking what you could do if you just had more money? HM? Do you know what that's a sign of? That you think that money could solve your problems. What you could do if you just had more money. Now, the Bible warns against trusting in uncertain riches, and from this point on in the message, I'm going to give you a lot of Scripture. Get a pen and pencil. Do not look up the Scripture—you will not have time. I took a calculated risk when I prepared this message and I knew that I had far too many scriptures for you to turn to, so I want you to jot them down.

If you're a person now that's trusting in riches, Proverbs eleven verse four. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath. But righteousness delivereth from death." One of these days you're going to die my dear friend, and your not going to buy your way into heaven. That's what that says. Proverbs eleven twenty-eight. "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall." Now there's the trust test. If you're trusting money, in any way, my dear friend, the love of money is the root of evil in your life.

#### **B. Do You Love Money? The Priority Test**

Not only the trust test, but the priority test. Let me ask you another question. What are your personal goals? Do you have goals in life? You ask the average person, what is your goal in life? Well, he says, I want to have a career, I want to do this, I want to achieve this. And, generally, when he gets down to the bottom of the thing, he wants to get his kids through school, he wants to buy a house, he wants to retire and live comfortably, and then die and go to heaven. Now, basically, those goals are financial goals. Now, my dear friend, if the highest priority in your life is financial, the love of money is going to be the root of all kinds of evil in your life.

Do you know what your highest goals ought to be? To be a Spirit-filled Christian. To have at least your desires, to have godly children. To leave a heritage. To be a soul winner. I mean if your ambitions are all wrapped up in money rather than in spiritual things, I mean, what really does motivate you today? What really motivates you today? The priority test.

Time after time, some man will come to me and say, now pastor, I'm going to have to leave here, I can't be a deacon here any more, I can't be a teacher here anymore, I can't do this, I can't do that. I say why not? He says my company is moving me off to such and such a place. I said, well is it the will of God for you? Well, listen, I am getting a twenty percent raise in my salary. Or if I don't go, they are going to fire me. So, if so facto I'm going.

Now, my dear friend, that man has no right to move just simply because his company says so. God must say so. God must say so. You say pastor, your not being realistic. My dear friend, I am being ultimately realistic. What would you think of a pastor who would go to one church other than because the other church is going to pay him more money? Well, I'm glad to get rid of the rascal. I mean if he would leave, if he would leave this church and go to another church for more money we don't want him as a pastor, and I would agree. I would agree. But it takes as much of the blood of Jesus to save you, as it does any pastor or believer. Isn't that right?

Your life belongs to Jesus Christ and you must find the will of God for your life. I mean, where are the men today who say I'm going to leave a high paying job, and I'm going to go to this place and take less pay in order that I might be a better servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. There ought to be some people like that.

Define the will of God for your life. What I'm asking you, my dear friend, is the trust test. I'm asking you about the priority test, I'm asking you about the surrender test, to find out whether or not there is the love of money in your life.

May I ask you this question? Is there anything...?—now you answer, don't answer it out loud but answer it. Is there anything, I say anything, that you would not gladly give to Jesus Christ that you call material if He asked you for it? Now, dear friend, don't just nod your head, I want you to think about it. Is there anything that you think that you own that you would not gladly give to Jesus Christ if He asked you for it? Now, if there is my dear friend, you have a problem called the love of money.

### **C. Do You Love Money? The Admiration Test**

Or let me ask you another question. The admiration test. What do you really admire? I mean, what really turns you on? You tell that by your reading. What what's your favorite magazine? Forbes Magazine? Money Magazine? Wall Street Journal? Your investment newsletter? Or the Word of God? Had you rather be invited to the house of the rich and famous, or the righteous and the faithful? I mean if somebody were to invite

you, one of these high muckety mucks invited you, do you say, hey, wow, look whose house I'm going to? Had you rather be invited there to dinner or to the house of somebody who is a true man or woman of God.

You see, where your values are—the things that you admire—that tells whether or not you have the love of money. Now, if you have money and hold money rightly, then as a steward, there are four things I want to basically point out to you that you must do with your money.

## **I. God Is Interested in How You Secure Money**

First of all, you must learn how to secure money. Did you know that God wants to help you on your job and God wants to help you to secure money? The Bible encourages honest work. The Bible encourages investment. The Bible encourages making of money. We are stewards, and a steward is a person who handles the affairs of his lord in a profitable way.

Look in verse two. "And he called him, and said unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee, give an account of thy stewardship." One of these days, God is going to ask me, Adrian, what did you do with the money I have entrusted you with? One of these days, He's going to ask you the question, what did you do with the money He trusted you with?

Now, let me tell you something about stewardship. Stewardship is that area of life where men make money and God makes men. Stewardship is that area of life where men make money and God makes men. And God will help you to prosper.

Did you know that God wants you to prosper? The Bible says in Psalm thirty-five and verse twenty-seven, the Lord delights in the prosperity of His servant. God smiles when you're prosperous. The Lord delights in the prosperity of His servants. The Bible says in Deuteronomy chapter eight and verse eighteen. "It is the Lord thy God that giveth thee power to get wealth." You say, well, I did it myself, oh you did? Where'd you get the brain? You did? Where'd you get the strength? You did? Whose air were you breathing? Whose food were you eating? Whose earth were you walking on? It's the Lord thy God that giveth thee power to get wealth.

Now, my dear friend, bring God into the making of your money. Learn, number one, how to secure money.

### **A. Don't Secure Your Money at Too High a Price**

But how did you say that? Let me tell you this. Do not gain your money, do not secure your money, at too high a price. Not at the cost of your life, not at the cost of your family, not at the cost of your health.

Put this verse down. Psalm 127 and verse two. "It is vain for you to rise up early to stay up late. To eat the bread of sorrows." That means don't burn the candle at both

ends. You burn the candle at both ends, your not as bright as you think you are. Some people spend the first part of their lives squandering and sacrificing their health in order to gain their wealth. They spend the second half of their lives spending their so called wealth to try to get their health back. And they are unhappy in both parts of their lives. So, don't make money at expense of life, health, or family.

#### **B. Don't Make Money in Any Manner Contrary to the Laws of God or the Laws of Man**

Number two. Don't make money in any manner that is contrary to the laws of God or the laws of man. For example in our county, and in our nation, everybody's turning to gambling. Everybody say's what's wrong with gambling? I'll tell you what's wrong with gambling. My dear friend, it is contrary to the laws of God—it is an economic swindle. Put it down big, put it down plain and put it down straight. It is taking from other's putting in your pocket that which does not belong to you. You say, well, but I did it legally. That's right. Gambling is a payment for chance to take from other people. It is your pleasure and profit at somebody else's pain and loss. No one can win at gambling without someone else losing. It's just that simple, my dear friend.

Or perhaps you're in the liquor business. You're in the liquor business—you ought to get out of it. The liquor business, my dear friend, is brewed with tears, thickened with blood, and flavored with death, and the Bible says in Habakkuk chapter two, verse fifteen, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor to drink that putteth thy bottle to him that maketh him drunken." I watched the basketball game Friday night and I was thoroughly disgusted to see college basketball sponsored by the beer barons of this world. It makes me m-a-d—MAD to see that happen. No, you're not to get money that way. Not through the selling of pornography and these other things, no. God's against these.

You say, well, a man's got to live. No, you're wrong. He's got to die. He's got to die. And after he dies, he must hear God say give an account of thy stewardship. But on the other hand. If, my dear friend, you are in a good and a honorable business, then whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. If you are a business man, be a good one. If you are a sales man, be a good one. My dear friend, if you are a clerk, be a good clerk. If you are a laborer, be a good laborer. My dear friend, God will buoy you and God will tell you how to secure money. First Thessalonians four, verses eleven and twelve, the Bible says were to "study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you that you may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

You say, well, Adrian, what do you know about work? You're a preacher, and preachers don't work. A lot of people believe that. My dear friend, I want to tell you I know what it is to work. I've known from a child what it is to work. As a child I worked to buy my own clothes and so forth. My dad could buy my clothes for me, but he gave me

the privilege of doing it myself.

I know what it is from just a little kid before I got in junior high school to give up coconuts and open them and sell them to yankees. Every now and then we'd give one to a yankee that was not open and roll in the grass laughing at him trying to open it with a screw driver and a hack saw. I know what it is to go down the A & P Grocery and say to people there without being on the payroll, ma'am, may I carry your groceries for you?

I know what it is to go out and cut grass in the neighborhood, and friend, we didn't have one of these either. We had one of these. I'm telling you with that old roller mower there in that St. Augustine grass down there in Florida, you talk about something that'll build legs for football later, that'll do it. I know what it is.

I know what it is, my dear friend, to work my way through college. My dad was not able to pay my way through college. But I have worked as a laborer. I've worked in construction jobs, I've worked in elevator jobs, I've worked as fruit packer, I have worked my dear friend cleaning tables in the school for my food, I've worked in the A/P as a butcher, I have tried to sell automobiles, I have done all of these things. Notice, I said try to sell automobiles. I've done all of these things. And I know what it was in seminary—four years of seminary. I know what it is to work for a dollar an hour for a Horace Pest Control crew, crawling around on my hands and knees, under houses with a flashlight inspecting houses for termites. But I know what it is my dear friend, to go into school and come out of school without my wife going to work and getting out of school having my bills paid without owing anybody anything to the glory of God. I thank God for that.

But I know what work is. And I'm not ashamed to work. I don't expect when my dad dies, that he's going to leave me much inheritance. I'm just thankful they have enough, and I pray God that they will have enough to live on out until they go to heaven. But my dad gave me an inheritance. And I want to tell you what my inheritance was. He was a laboring man, a working man, not ashamed to work, made his kids work, and that is an inheritance that I thank God for, and I never once wonder whether my dad was ever going to leave my mother for another woman. How I thank God for good, honest, all-American people. I thank God for that inheritance, that my dear friend is the kind of inheritance that people need today in America.

God has a plan. And it's the plan we used to see on television. We make money the old-fashioned way. We earn it.

## **II. God Is Interested in How You Save Money**

Now, my dear friend, let me tell you something else. Not only is God interested in the way that you secure money. But God is interested in the way that you save money—that you save money. The Bible teaches the saving of money. Now the Bible does not

teach the hoarding of money. But the Bible does teach the saving of money. The Bible makes it very, very plain that you are to plan for the future. That's one of the reasons that I'm glad that we are having these seminars that we are having on Sunday nights in financial security and financial investments and financial freedom.

Put these verses down. Proverbs chapter six, verses six through eight. "Go to the ant thou sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise. Which having no god, overseer or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest." Now what does that mean? It means, my dear friend, that the ants know that the winter is coming. And so the ants are storing up. The ants know how to save. Your not to spend everything that you earn. Proverbs chapter twenty-one and verse twenty. "There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise. But the foolish man spendeth it all."

I was talking this past week with a senior saint from Bellevue, somebody who grew up here at Bellevue Baptist Church and came up under the ministry of Dr. Robert G. Lee. I said, tell me something about what Dr. Lee taught you about giving. And she said this. I want you to listen to it. Dr. Lee taught it, she said, and I never shall forget. If we made twenty dollars a week, and we spent a nickel more than we made, then we are a failure. The Dr. Lee taught us that if we made twenty dollars a week and we saved a nickel only a nickel, we were a success. If we spent a nickel more than we made we were a failure. But if we saved only a nickel we were a success.

Proverbs twenty-one, verse twenty, "There's treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise. But a foolish man spendeth it all." Now, you're to save, but you're not to hoard. And the Bible warns against hoarding. And, by the way, just put your bookmark there and turn to James chapter five. Did somebody take it out of my Bible? There it is. "Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver is chanced and the rust of them shall be witness against you and shall eat your flesh as if it were fire. Ye have heaped together, " and the word treasure there is the word we get our word thesaurus from, which means a collection—"you heap together treasure for the last days." Now, what He is saying is, that one of these days rusty riches is going to stand up and testify against you in the day of judgment.

Now, this word treasure you heap together treasure, it means a collection. Some people collect money like other people collect guns or stamps. To them it is a hobby. And the Bible does not condemn wealth. Abraham was a wealthy man. Joseph of Arimethea was a wealthy man. David was a wealthy man. Barnabas was a wealthy man. Martha and Mary and Lazarus—they were wealthy. But what the Bible does condemn is collecting money in a spirit of ruthless greed. The Bible calls that covetousness. And when you die, your epitaph may be the richest fool in the cemetery.

With some people, making money is a gain, or with other people, making money is an addiction. They are never satisfied.

Now, you ought to save. But what is the difference between saving and hoarding? Saving is putting aside to meet future needs. Hoarding is treasuring up money that you do not need, and trying to build up a surplus for whatever reason you may have. Now, there is nothing wrong with saving, as a matter of fact, the Bible teaches you to save. And the Bible says, go to the ant thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise.

I was reading where Larry Burkette said this. It was an amazing thing to me. He said that the average American is worth more at twenty-five than he is at sixty-five. Isn't that a shame? The average American, is worth more at the age of twenty-five than he is at sixty-five. That is, a man has lived his full working life and has spent more than he has made.

### **III. God Is Interested in How You Spend Your Money**

Now, my dear friend, we need, and what were going to try to show you and what we are trying to show you is that God is interested in number one, in how you secure money. God takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. Number two, God is interested in how you save money. Number three, God is interested in how you spend money—in how you spend money.

You know what I could do? I could find out so much about you if I could get a hold of your bank book. And just read the stubs. The canceled checks. Find out where your money went. I've been a pastor long enough to know that most marital difficulty is not sex, but money. And my dear friend, it is not primarily the amount of money that people make. If people cannot subsist on little, they cannot subsist on much. And that next raise, probably will not get you out of financial difficulty. It will probably get you into deeper debt. Because you will say now we can pay more in our monthly payments and so forth.

And so, in spending money, may your dear friendly pastor give you some advice. May I tell you, I'm not a financial advisor. If you have and you want to learn about stocks and bonds and all that, don't come to me. I invested in an avocado mine one time and that didn't work out so don't come to me about that. I don't know anything about that. But I want to tell you something my dear friend. I do know some Biblical principles. And I'm not standing up here as a financial advisor telling you where to put your money or whatever. But I am going to tell you this: How to spend your money.

#### **A. Beware of Credit Buying**

Number one, You beware of credit buying. Just beware of credit buying. You know what most of our young couples in this church need is plastic surgery. I mean, they need to take their scissors and cut up those credit cards. What they are doing, rather

than looking to God to meet their needs, they are looking to the false God of credit, rather than looking to the Lord in honest work.

The Bible tells us, in Proverbs chapter twenty-eight and verses forty-three and following, that the stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee and thou shalt not lend to him. He shall be the head and thou shalt be the tail. My dear friend, you want him to be heads, he wins and tails you lose? Get out of debt.

You say, but Pastor, I'm already in debt. As a matter of fact, I'm out of control. Well, I'm going to tell you how to get out of debt. I don't know what the seminars said; I haven't seen it yet. But I'm going to tell you how to get out of debt. Number one, don't borrow any more money. Say amen. Now listen, don't borrow any more money. Absolutely.

Number two, take what you have, every penny that you have that is extra and designated that to the paying of your debt before you do anything else. Now, the tithe is not extra. Don't try to get out of debt by using God's tithe. That would be the most foolish thing that you could do. But you exclude everything except the bare most necessities. And designate it to getting out of debt.

Number three, you sell anything that you have that you don't just have to have. And especially sell those depreciating items that are eating up all your money. You're driving a \$15,000 car and you're in debt. Get rid of that car. And buy a thousand dollar car. After all, the purpose of a car, a five hundred dollar car, if you can find one, is to get you from point A to point B. It doesn't matter what it looks like, dear friend. It's not there to look at; it's there to ride in. And get you a car that you can afford and stop making those payments. Get rid of those things.

And then, begin to pay yourself rather than paying other people. There are people who are in debt who are paying other people to cut their grass. There are people who are in debt paying people to clean their house. There are people who are in debt paying people to paint their house. You pay yourself. And then with that money that you pay yourself, pay that debt down. Set a goal to be out of debt and get frugal. Don't go out to eat. You don't have to go out to eat. Don't buy those expensive kinds of foods. You don't have to buy new clothes. You say, well, Easter is coming. Nobody cares what you look like at Easter, except you.

Just come here, my dear friend, and serve the Lord with gladness and don't spend that money. Go to your creditors and tell them, look I am going to pay you a little. I am going to get out of debt. I owe you this money and here is my plan. And tell them. They'll work with you. Even the IRS will work with you. They'd rather have you out of jail paying a little than in jail paying nothing. If you go to them my dear friend, and tell them that you have a plan, I am telling you my dear friend, that you need to spend money wisely and

don't do any more credit buying for those kinds of items. Just don't do it. Beware of credit buying.

### **B. Beware of Impulse Buying**

Number two, beware of impulse buying. Buy according to your needs, not according to your greeds. That's why it's so important that you make a budget and stick to it. Let me give you a verse here—Proverbs thirteen and verse four: "The soul of the sluggard desireth and have nothing, but the soul of a diligent shall be made fat." Proverbs chapter six and verse eight: "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." Do you know what a budget is? A budget is to keep you from impulse buying. A budget my dear friend, is a system where you tell your dollars where to go rather than asking where they went. Did you know this whole system Madison Avenue and everything else is there to get you with impulse buying?

I go to the grocery store about twice a year. Man, I'd be a sucker. I'm telling you the grocery store I go to they start in the bakery. You go around this way, and there is all those fruit. Then over here, as I remember, the cookies. Then you come around this aisle over there, and all those, I never knew all of that stuff was in there. Man, Joyce won't let me go there, because I never get past, you know, the first thing. They are there ready to say, you need this, you need this, and everything on that item, on that shelf says buy me, buy me, buy me. When Joyce goes, she makes a list. She knows what she's going to get before she ever goes in there.

### **C. Beware of Ego Buying**

Beware of impulse buying, my dear friend, and beware of ego buying. Beware of ego buying. Oh, boy. This ego buying. Do you know why so many of us are in debt? We're buying things that we don't need with money that we don't have to impress people we don't like. That's right. I mean it is our abominable pride that gets us into trouble. The Bible says in Proverbs twenty-nine and verse twenty three, "A man's pride shall bring him low."

I want to ask you a question. Do you really play golf any better because you got an alligator on your shirt? Or do you really think those girls like you any more because of what you got sewed on the hip pocket of your jeans? No! My dear friend, that is all a fantastic matter of pride.

These young couples, they get out of here and they are paying four hundred and fifty dollars a month for an apartment. The real estate agent comes along here and says well, you know for a hundred and fifty dollars more, you'd be buying your own home. Six hundred dollars a month. They never stopped to ask themselves, can we pay six hundred dollars a month? They just simply say, well, yeah, man, we can be buying, and we wouldn't be wasting all that money we're paying for rent.

So they'd beg, scrub, borrow, and get a down payment and begin to buy a house for six hundred dollars a month, but the real estate agent doesn't tell them that they have to cut their own grass now. And when the water heater goes out, they have to repair it. And now they have got to get the insurance, they've got to do all of these other things.

My dear friend, I'm not against your moving up, and I'm not against your buying a bigger house. But do you know whether you can really afford it? Are you just simply saying, we need a house? And then when you get a house, you get a house. Just when you move in, then your friends get a bigger one. And you never reach your goal. You're never satisfied with what you have. The Bible says, godliness with contentment is great gain; and having therewith food and raiment, let us be content.

## **Conclusion**

My dear friend, I wish I had more time to talk about that, but my time is gone. Let me just let me say one last thing and I'll preach about this one in great length next week. But not only do you need to learn how to secure you money. Not only do you need to learn how to save your money. Not only do you need to learn how to spend your money, but the Bible has so much to say precious friend, about how to share your money—how to share your money.

I've preached a while back where the Bible says it is more blessed to give than to receive. What a joy it is to give. But you've got to get financially free, so that you can have more to give. Do you know what giving is? Do you know what giving is? Oh my dear friend, here is the thrill of giving. Giving is just joining God and meeting someone else's need. Isn't that a thrill—that you become a partner with God, that you have the ability to be used of God to help meet the need of somebody else? And the Bible says, it is more blessed to give than it is to receive.

# Faithful Stewardship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 19, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 16:1–13**

*“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much:  
and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”*

LUKE 16:10

## Outline

Introduction

- A. Do You Love Money? The Trust Test
- B. Do You Love Money? The Priority Test
- C. Do You Love Money? The Surrender Test
- I. You Need to Learn How to Secure Money
- II. You Need to Learn How to Save Money
- III. You Need to Learn How to Spend Money
- IV. You Need to Learn How to Share Money

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you turn to the sixteenth chapter of Luke, and I want to speak for a while about faithful stewardship. We have exercised stewardship this morning, but we need to exercise faithful stewardship all of our lives.

Luke, chapter 16, verse 1: “And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods” Now, the word steward means manager. He was one who was to manage the rich man’s affairs, but rather than being a good manager, he was guilty of malpractice. He had wasted that which had been entrusted to him.

“And he—that is, the master—called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship...” Ladies and gentlemen, one of these days, our Heavenly Father is going to say just that to us, is that not right? “...give an account of thy stewardship...” As surely as I’m standing here, we’re going to have to face our Lord and He is going to say to us, “I trusted certain things into your hands. Now give an account of your stewardship.”

And then he said to this man, “...for thou mayest no longer be steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the

stewardship. I cannot dig—that is, I am not strong enough or perhaps he was not lowly minded enough to do manual labor—I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, that they may receive me into their houses—that is, if I can't work here, I've got to have someone to take care of me.

So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? Hand he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty." That is, you owe a hundred measures, but let's just cook the books. Let's just say that you owe fifty, and then the other fifty, we'll negotiate on that between the two of us.

Now, I'm reading between the lines, but that's what he's saying. "...and he said to another," in verse 7, "...And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him. Take thy bill, and write four-score—that is, sixty. And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you—this is what Jesus is saying to you, to me, to us—I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness..." He's talking there about what we would call today in the vernacular "filthy lucre." He's talking about money. "...that when ye fail..." That is, when you don't have any pace to go or any more source of income. That is, actually, literally, as we're going to see later on, when you die. "...that they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

And then, here's what our Lord says about faithful stewardship. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you've not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Now, these banners, if they have said one thing to us, they've said this: that Jesus Christ is Lord. And when He became Lord, He became Lord of all. And Lord of all includes our wealth. He is Lord of our wealth. And we are here to manage what He has placed into our hands; our wealth, which is really His wealth.

God is interested in your money. I know you're interested in it, but I want to tell you that God is interested in it. Not because He needs it—He doesn't need your money; He wants you. So, therefore, God is interested in how you secure your money. God is interested in how you save your money. God is interested in how you spend your money. And God is interested in how you share your money.

Now, the Bible has much to say about the right use of money, and the Bible never condemns the ownership of money. Money is not evil, not evil at all, not in and of itself.

God made the gold. God made the silver. The earth is the Lords. It is not money; it is the love of money, the inordinate love of money that gets people into trouble.

First Timothy chapter 6 and verse 10 says this: “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Some translators give it this way. “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, which, while some covet after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Wealth in the hand of a believer, consecrated wealth, can do so much. It can be food for the hungry, it can be drink for the thirsty, clothes for the needy, and money can send the gospel, along with prayer, around the world.

Now, the parable that we’re looking at tonight is a strange parable. It sometimes gives people an uneasy feeling because it’s the, it’s the story of a crook who, in some measure, was commended for being a crook. Now that causes us problems if we don’t listen very carefully. What this man had been doing was stealing from his master. When he realized that he was going to lose his job, because of his laziness and his dishonesty, he began to make plans.

Now, he was too lazy to work, he was ashamed to beg, but he was not ashamed to steal, so he began to steal from his master. The way he did it was to get in cahoots with his master’s debtors. A man that owed a hundred measures of oil, he was told just write down fifty measure of oil. Another owed a, a hundred measures of wheat. He said, “Write down eighty measures of wheat.” Etc.

Now, the owner of the whole thing, the master, the lord of the enterprise, found out what this manager was doing, and he said, “Well, you’ll have to give him credit for one thing—he’s shrewd. He’s thinking out of head.” Look in verse 8: “And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely...” Not righteously, just wisely. The word here means shrewdly. “...for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”

Now, why was this man wise? What, what was there that this man did, crook as he was? What did he do that you and I ought to emulate? Well, as the people of this world aim steadily at their selfish objects, we, as children of light, should give a burning focus on our devotion to Jesus Christ. You see, this man began to think, he began to weigh things. He looked ahead to the future. He said, “Well, if I can’t work here in this office anymore, I’ve got to have some people who are going to take care of me, some people who are going to welcome me later on.” And you and I need to do exactly the same thing.

What our Lord is teaching is that we are to use our money to make friends who will welcome us into heaven, and will say to us when we get there, “Thank you for giving to the Lord.” We often hear people say, “You can’t take it with you.” No, but you can send it on ahead. And the way that you send it on ahead is to invest it in the only thing that’s

going to heaven, and that is the souls of men.

Now, I'll tell you something else this parable teaches. This parable teaches us very clearly that our use of money, the way we use our material possessions, is the measure of how God can trust us with spiritual blessings. Now, this is one of the most challenging passages, I believe, on giving and stewardship in the Bible. Look in verses 10 through 13. Here's what our Lord says, "He that is faithful in that which is least—in small things—is faithful also in much..." He doesn't say could be, would be, might be, perhaps can be. He says he is. Why? Because, everything big is made up of little things. So if you're faithful in little things, ipso facto. As night follows day, you are automatically faithful in much because the much is made up of the little. It's the sum total of the little. And so, if you take care of the little, the much takes care of itself. And so, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least—as this man was unjust, this unjust steward—is unjust also in much." It doesn't say he might be, could be. If you're a thief, whether you steal five dollars or five million, sir, you are a thief. It's just that plain, and, and if you're unfaithful in that which is least, you're unfaithful also in that which is much. Now, here's what our Lord is saying. Listen. "If, therefore, you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon—that is, if you have not handled your finances rightly—who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Now, this is saying God looks at the way we handle our material goods, and He says, "Now, I'm going to watch Adrian handle his material goods, and when I see how he handles his material goods, I will know whether I can trust him with something better and bigger than material goods." The way you handle material goods is an index, a measurement, of how you would handle greater treasure. Now, if we don't' rightfully handle that which is not our own, that is, everything material we have is not our own. The earth is the Lord" and the fullness thereof. We're only managers. We're only stewards of what we have. It's not your house, not your car, not your clothes, not your bank account—it's His. We're managers. Now, if we don't manage that well, then how is God going to give to us true spiritual wealth. I believe this. I believe there are people here that could be blessed in a far greater way than they ought to be blessed, and God wants, wants to bless them. I believe God is withholding blessings because they have been tried with money. God has given them money and found out that they were unfaithful with the money. And so, therefore, God could not commit to them greater spiritual riches. Because, it follows as night follows the day, if we have been unfaithful in the lesser, we shall be unfaithful in the greater.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 13. Here, He just sums it up. "No servant can serve two masters..." Now, He doesn't say that you can't have two jobs. You can have two jobs. He doesn't say that, you can't have two hobbies. You can have two hobbies. But you can only have one master because there's only one who has the right to control

your life. You cannot, it is impossible to serve two masters. "...for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other, You can't serve God and mammon." Let's put it where we can understand it. You can't put God first and money first. You can't put God first and money first. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Now, would you like to learn whether your money is your master or your servant? Would you like to find out which master you're serving, would you? Say yes. Okay. Good. Thank you. Now, let me give you some tests here to find out whether or not you're trying to serve mammon and think you're serving God.

### **A. Do You Love Money? The Trust Test**

First of all, there's the trust test. What are you trusting in? Are you trusting in your money? Are you trusting in uncertain riches? Do you spend your time visualizing what money can do rather than what God can do? Well, if you do, folks, you're going to find out that money won't do for you what you think it might do for you when you get ready to call upon it. Let me give you some verses. Proverbs 11, verse 4: "Riches profit not in the day of wrath..." That is, at the final judgment, don't go rolling off several thousand-dollar bills and wave them at God and say, "God, give me a nice seat up here in heaven somewhere." It won't work. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death." Ha. You're not going to buy or bribe your way into heaven. Proverbs 11, verse 28: "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall, but the righteous shall flourish as a branch." Now, if you want to find out whether money is your money or not, ask, ask yourself this question: Are you really trusting money? Many people are. They think if they can be like that rich fool that we're going to read about, or could read about later on. His crops came in wonderfully well and his barns were filled. He built bigger barns. He got in a hammock, got a pink lemonade, stretched himself out, and said, "Hey, eat, drink, and be merry. I have got it made." God said, "You're a fool, you're a fool. This night your soul will be required of you. Then whose is all this going to be?"

### **B. Do You Love Money? The Priority Test**

All right. Let me give you another test. It's not only the trust test, but the priority test. What is the priority of your life? What are your personal goals? Now, everybody here has some personal goals. They may be big, they may be little, but everybody has one. Let me ask you this. Are your personal goals financial or spiritual? Are your personal goals financial or are they spiritual? What are you really looking forward to? What is the aim of your life? Is it to pay off your house, to retire, to have a certain kind of bank account? Is that what molds you? Is that what consumes you? Or is the thing that molds you and consumes you, knowing God more deeply? Are you concerned, primarily, of the character of your children? Are you concerned with the spread of the gospel? Are

you concerned with the kingdom of heaven? If somebody offered you a promotion and offered you more money, but it might mean that you'd have to take your children out of a Christian school or out of their Sunday School class here, take them into a bad environment, but you would be making megabucks, what would you do? Many people say, "Well, this is life. I've got a promotion, I've got to go." I have known of people, and I thank God I have, who have taken a lesser salary in order to get their family in a better, spiritual environment. What is your goal? I mean, is your goal to impress other people, to let them see how big your house is, how well you dress? Is it to satisfy your pride? Is it to gain power? Is it to become "secure" through money? If it is, then your priorities are wrong. But if the burning aim of your life, the burning aim of your life, is what the apostle Paul said, "This one thing I do, that is, to know Him," then God is your master. You can't serve two. It's one or the other.

### **C. Do You Love Money? The Surrender Test**

Well, let me just, as they might say in the country, plow a little closer to the corn. The surrender test. Let me ask you this question: Is there any material possession that you hold management of that you would not gladly part with for the glory of God? Don't answer out loud. Is there any material possession that, you hold management over, that you would not gladly depart with for the glory of God? Or, let me ask it another way. What do you really admire? I mean, what, what turns you on? If you're on the airplane and you want to read, what do you turn to? The Wall Street Journal? Forbes? Business Weekly? Or the Word of God, or some devotional book? I'm not saying it's wrong to read the Wall Street Journal, Forbes Magazine, or Business News. But, I mean, where's your longing? What really do you admire? Does the lifestyle of the rich and the famous, does that impress you? What are you more impressed with—the lifestyle of the rich and the famous or the righteous and the faithful? I mean, if you were invited into a home. You had your choice to go into the home of the rich and the famous or to go into the home of some godly man or woman who lives for God, knows God, somebody who could impart to you spiritual blessing, which would you choose? You can't serve two masters. Now, these are just simply questions.

What are the marks of a good steward? What are the marks of a faithful steward?

### **I. You Need to Learn How to Secure Money**

Well, number one, we need to be faithful in the way that we secure money. You know, the Bible encourages hard work. Don't ever get the idea that the aim of life is to get enough money where you won't have to work anymore. Oh, no. No matter how much money you have, you should never stop working. If you don't have to work to put bread on the table, that just simply means you've got more time to serve Jesus. I mean, you've just got, don't ever get the idea that God wants you to be idle. Oh, when you get

older, your strength is not as what it needs to be, and you may need to rest more. There's a difference in rest and, and idleness. You need to make money. And the making of money is the way that, men make money and God makes men. Now, the Bible is not against prosperity. I thank God for people who prosper. We have some prosperous people come to our church and I'm so grateful that they do. Here's what the Bible says about prosperity in Psalm 35, verse 27: "Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause. Yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." God takes pleasure when His servants prosper. And if you do prosper, the Bible says in Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 18: "For thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he who giveth thee power to get wealth..." God takes pleasure in your prosperity. And if you do prosper you say, "Thank you Lord. You gave me that. You took pleasure in my prosperity, and You're the one who gave me power to get wealth." And, many of God's choicest of servants have had wealth, and I thank God for them.

But be careful in making of money that you don't pay too high a price. For example, if you make money at the expense of your health, you paid too big a price. Amen? Have you ever known anybody to make money at the expense of their health? They paid too big a price. What does the Bible say in Psalm 127, and verse 2: "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late to eat the bread of sorrows..." What good is it? Somebody said, "You burn the candle at both ends you're not as bright as you think you are." What good is it to rise up early and to stay up late and you eat the bread of sorrows? "...for so he giveth his beloved sleep." That literally says He gives to His beloved while they sleep. You rest and God says, "I'll take care of your business." Somebody said that some people spend the first half of their lives sacrificing their health to get their wealth, and they spend the second half of their lives sacrificing their wealth to try to get their health back, and they're unhappy in both halves. God is interesting in how you secure your money, but if you do it at the price of your health, it's a poor bargain. And if you do it at the price of your character, it's a poor bargain. Are you a shrewd businessman? You cut deals that cause you to cut corners? You're paying too much money for your success. Gambling. You say, "I can make money gambling." Well, maybe you can, but you can't make money without somebody else losing. Money made by gambling is contrary to the law of God. Technically, it is a swindle. It is theft by deception. You see, stealing is taking from others. Under the law, as we have legalized gambling, gambling is a payment for a chance to take from other people. It's your pleasure and profit at somebody else's pain and loss. Real business is win-win. Bad business is win-lose. In order for you to win, somebody else has to lose. That's the reason I could never be in the liquor business. Liquor is brewed with tears and thickened with blood and flavored with death, and the Bible says in Habakkuk 2, verse 15: "Woe unto him that gives his

neighbor to drink..." Maybe you're listening on the radio and you're in the liquor business. Please get out of it. Maybe you're in that business in this congregation. Please get out of it because you're paying too big a price for the money that you make. The same thing is true of pornography or any business that God cannot bless. You say, "Well, a man's gotta live." No, no, no, no, he's gotta die, and then face God. And then he's going to hear God say to him, "Give an account of your stewardship." But if you are in an honorable business, no matter what it is, if it's honorable, not dishonorable, if it doesn't hurt you or cause you to hurt somebody else, then do it with all of your might. Use your mind. Develop your skills. Don't be afraid to work. 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 11 and 12. Paul said, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you. That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." God says, "You want a deal with Me. Go to work, go to work." Now, there are those who cannot work, but God says, "If a man will not work, neither should he eat."

## **II. You Need to Learn How to Save Money**

Learn how to secure money and then learn how to save money. Now, the Bible teaches the saving of money, but the Bible forbids the hoarding of money. Now, what's the difference? Well, saving money is planning for the future. Listen to Proverbs, chapter 6, verses 6 through 8: "Go to the ant, thy sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise, which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest." The little ant, the little creature, just by divine instinct, goes out there and gathers food and stores it because the ant knows that the cold, hard winter is coming. And so this, this tells us we're not to spend everything that we earn. Proverbs 21, verse 20: "There is treasure to be desired, and oil, in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man spendeth it up." One of our older people here at Bellevue, who was here when Dr. Lee was here, told me one time, said, "Pastor, you know what Dr. Lee used to tell us? Dr. Lee told us if we made \$20 a week and spent one nickel more than we made, we were a failure. But he said if we made \$20 a week and saved just one nickel, more than we made, then we were a success." You see, that's it. We're to save money. We're to leave an inheritance for our children, if we can, but we're not to hoard money. You're to save according to your need, not according to your greed. Now James talks of people who hoard money. Just look, if you will, in James, chapter 5. This is worth turning to here for a moment. And look with me in, in, in the Book of James, chapter 5, in the first three verses. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and, and, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure

together for the last days.” Now, what’s he talking about? He is talking here about treasure that’s been heaped together.

Now, what’s he talking about? He is talking here about treasure that’s been heaped together. He’s talking here about money that’s been taken out of circulation. It’s heaped together, salted down, it’s hoarded up. He’s using the word—He says, “You’ve treasured it up.” The word for treasure is the word we get out word thesaurus from, and it means a collection. Have you known people that just like to collect things? There’s nothing wrong with having collections. Some people collect stamps. Some people collect figurines, and so forth. Some people collect money. I mean, that’s, that’s their hobby. I mean, not because they, they need it. I mean, they’re, they’re not, they’re not saying, “I’m, I’m taking care of my future.” They’re just saying, “I am collecting money.” Now, again, I want to tell you, the Bible does not condemn a man for being wealthy. Abraham was wealthy. David was wealthy. Joseph was wealthy. Joseph of Arimathea was wealthy. Barnabas was wealthy. Mary was wealthy. Martha, Lazarus—they had a home that could entertain, and so forth, and God used that, but what the Bible warns against is not saving, but ruthless greed. The Bible calls that a spirit of covetousness. God wants His money in circulation. Don’t let your epitaph be, “The Richest Fool in the Cemetery Lies Buried Here.” It’s one thing to save; it’s another thing to hoard. To some people, getting money is like, playing a game. They’re only keeping score. What’s the difference between saving and hoarding? In hoarding the goal is to create a surplus. In saving you are anticipating the future and preparing for it. And God will help you to see the difference.

### **III. You Need to Learn How to Spend Money**

Now, you, you need to know how to secure money. You need to know how to save money. And you need to know how to spend money. Very frankly, most of our young people in this congregation need to be taught how to spend money. I’ve been a pastor long enough to know that this causes more marriage difficulties than anything else. And the difference is not how much money these kids are making, or older people. It’s attitude, not circumstance. And, the family who cannot manage on a little, is the same family who cannot manage on much. And to whom little is not enough, nothing is enough. You just simply have to learn how to manage. Some people, if they get a raise, then they just begin to spend more. I want to say something to you young marrieds here. Some of you really need to have plastic surgery. I mean, you need to get the scissors and take that, credit card and just snip it in two, and throw it away. How easy it is to look to the false god of credit rather than to Almighty God to take care of your needs. Now, the Bible says that, His blessing will cause you to be a lender, and not a borrower. “Well,” you say, “Pastor Roger, I’m, I’m already out of control with consumer

credit.” Well, let me, I’m not a financial advisor. We have financial advisors; I’m certainly not one. One time I invested some money in an avocado mine and that didn’t work out. But, I want to give you some advice, and this is just common sense. If you are in deep consumer debt, you probably had a broken heart during the Love Offering this morning. You wanted to give more, but you said, “I can’t; I just can’t.” Well, let me tell you what to do. Don’t borrow any more money. You don’t put out a fire with gasoline. Number two, designate everything possible to debt retirement, except your absolute necessities, and that doesn’t include a lot of things that are in your garage and in your house that you need to take back or sell. So, number three, sell those items that are costing you money for upkeep. Get rid of them. If you’ve got a \$15,000 automobile, get rid of it and buy a \$1,000 automobile for transportation. Get rid of depreciation items. Stop paying other people to do jobs for you to clean your house or cut your grass and do it for yourself and pay yourself. Begin to live frugally. Don’t eat out. Don’t buy new clothes. If you need new clothes, look for them at bargain prices. And go to those people that you owe and tell them that you intend to pay them. Tell them what you’re doing, how you’ve changed your lifestyle, and they will work with you. Even the IRS will work with you. The IRS had rather have you paying them a little every week than seeing you in jail, giving them nothing. Get out of debt. Beware of just buying stuff by impulse. Buy according to your needs, and not your wants. That’s the reason it is so necessary, especially for younger people, to make a budget and stick to it. The Bible says in Proverbs 13, verse 4: “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” First Timothy 6, verse 8: “And having food and raiment let us be therewith be content.” You don’t even have to have a black and white television. Having food and clothing, be content.

Do you know what a budget is? A budget is just simply a system of you telling your dollars where to go, instead of you having to ask where they went. I mean, you’re just in control of it. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 27, verse 23: “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.” Do you know what our young people need to learn to do? Is stop buying things to fulfill ego. You know, Madison Avenue has done a marvelous job to make us buy on ego. We buy things with money we don’t need, don’t have, we buy things we don’t need to impress people we don’t like. Madison Avenue has done that to us. The Bible says in Proverbs 29, verse 23: “A man’s pride shall bring him low...” You don’t necessarily need a bigger house. You don’t necessarily have to have blue jeans with a little design on the hip pocket. Your knit shirt doesn’t have to have an alligator on it. Do they still put those alligators on, Brother Bob, I don’t know. You know, a real real estate agent will come to one of these young couples and say, “How much are you paying for that apartment?” “Well, we’re paying \$600 a month for the apartment.” “Man, I could get you in a house for just a little bit more than that, a

couple of hundred dollars more, you could be buying your own house.” “We could?” “Yeah. I can get you in that house.” You begin to figure, but he doesn’t tell you that the water heater is going to go out in that house. And he doesn’t tell you about the taxes. He doesn’t tell you about the paint and the upkeep. Learn satisfaction. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” I see these young people today. They get married. They have stuff Joyce and I didn’t have after we were married for 25 years. They go out and buy it—BANG—just like that. I mean, they’ve got it all. It’s all new. But from there on they have wall-to-wall carpeting and back-to-wall financing.

#### **IV. You Need to Learn How to Share Money**

And we need to learn how to secure money. We need to learn how to save money. We need to learn how to spend money. And, friend, you need to learn how to share money—how to share money, how to give. You begin with the tithe. Malachi 3, verse 10: “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I shall not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” You say, “Well, that’s easy for you to say, Adrian.” Now listen, folks. I have been working since I was child. I got up and ran a milk route when other junior high school kids were in bed. I’ve been buying my clothes and taking care of my expenses. I worked my way through college, four years of college, four years of seminary. Seven of those years I was married and raising a family, and I wanted my wife to stay home and take care of the children. I know what it is to work. I know what it is not to have an extra dollar. But Joyce and I have always tithed and gone beyond the tithe, and brought the tithe to the local church. God’s work will be done in God’s way. And I can tell you this—we have not regretted one penny of it. Learn to tithe. Be a faithful steward. It’s God’s money—it’s not yours. The tithe is only an indication that not one tenth of it belongs to Him, but ten tenths of it belongs to Him.

Every time I preach on tithing, I’ll get a letter from somebody who says, “You’re trying to put us under the law.” Friend, the Bible says that when we know Jesus, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Again, you think about it. Would you let a Jew under law do more than you would do under grace? Any man who would do that is a disgrace to grace. Begin with the tithe. That’s not the ceiling; it’s the floor. And then learn to give over and above the tithe, not in a legalistic way, but in a joyful way. As we said this morning in Acts chapter 20 and verse 35, “...to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” And when you get obedient to God in the matter of giving, you’re going to find an unusual joy, because you know what you’re doing when you’re giving that way? You are cooperating with God in the meeting of a need.

Let me say this. I am, I am so grateful today for the gifts this morning. And we had some very significant gifts, very significant, and I'm grateful for that, but do you know this: that the majority of the money in the world is not given by the wealthy? Most of it is given by the ordinary people. The National Family Council took a survey in 1989 and they found out that those whose incomes were above \$100,000 annually gave about 2% of their incomes. Those with incomes between ten and fifty thousand gave about 5%. And, of course, we know that people like you give more than that. But that statistic just shows that the more people have does not mean that they're going to give more. Thank God for those who do have, and can give, and do give. And I am so grateful for that.

Well, I'm going to close this message with verse 9. Look at it again. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." You know what I want to do? I want to go to heaven, and I know you do too. And when I get to heaven, I want to see Jesus. I tell you, if Jesus were in the heart of Red China I'd be making plans to get over there right now. I, When I go to heaven, I want to look upon Jesus to about ten billion years. I'll tell you what else I want to do. I want to meet some people there that are there because of me. Not because of me, because of Him, but because of Him in me and through me. OK. Don't you? I mean, hey, don't you want to go to heaven and have a welcome committee? Don't you want to meet some people there who will say, "Thank you for giving to the Lord. I'm so glad you did. Thank you for telling me about Jesus." Wouldn't it be wonderful for someone to take you by the hand and just walk you up to the throne and say, "Jesus, this is Adrian. He told me about You." Jesus said, "I knew that already." Wouldn't that be wonderful? Thank you for giving to the Lord.

## Conclusion

Folks, listen to me—listen to me. Fifty years from now we couldn't assemble this congregation because a great number of us will have checked out. Isn't that right? Ten years from now a great number of us will have checked out. Some of you younger people, maybe on your way home you'll check out. I don't know. Do your giving while you're living; then your knowing where it's going. Just do it for Jesus. Don't hold onto it. He wants you to make money. He wants you to save money. He wants you to spend money. And He wants you to share money. Be a faithful steward. You'll be so glad you did. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Lord God, teach me, and teach us, to wisely handle the resources that You've given to us. And I thank you, Lord, that You take pleasure in the prosperity of your servants. And I thank you, Lord, that You have prospered every one of us more than most of the people in the world. And Lord, help us to just to be faithful.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you've never really given your heart to Jesus Christ and trusted Him to save you, you ought to do that right now. Let me lead you in a prayer where you can pray and ask Christ to save you. Would you pray this way? "Dear God." Just pray in your heart. "Dear God. I want to be saved. I want to go to heaven when I die. And Lord, I want to know You while I live. And Lord, I'm a sinner. I'm lost. My sins deserve judgment. Lord, I cannot save myself. I need You, Lord. Lord, I need Your mercy. I need You to save me. And Lord, I know that You want to save me, and You sent Your Son to die for my sin. And Lord Jesus, I thank You that you died for me. I thank You that You paid for my sin with Your blood on that cross. Thank you for doing that, Jesus. Thank You for paying my sin debt. Lord Jesus, I believe that God raised You from the dead, I really do. And I know You're right now knocking on my heart's door. And right now, tonight, I open the door of my heart. I receive You now into my life as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus." Would you ask Him that right now? "Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Give me a new nature. Begin to live in me. And, Lord Jesus, I will follow You and serve You the rest of my life, by Your grace and for Your glory. Come n right now, Lord Jesus, and save me." Did you ask Him? Then thank Him like this. "Thank You for saving me, Jesus. I don't look for a sign or ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. You promised to do it, and You cannot lie. Thank You for saving me. And now, Lord, help me not to be ashamed of You. Help me to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Now, look up here. "Pastor Rogers, If I prayed that prayer, did Jesus save me?" Well, if you were sincere, I believe He saved you. And one of the marks that you're sincere is this—that you are willing to make it public. Jesus said clearly if you're ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of you. If you confess Him before men, He'll confess you before the Father in heaven. So, the choir is going to lead us in an invitational hymn. The ministers of this church are going to be down here in the front. And tonight, if you prayed that prayer and gave your heart to Jesus, or you prayed it some other time, maybe on the freeway, maybe at your kitchen sink, I want you to do something that will give Him glory, give you joy. To help settle and seal your decision. I want you to come forward. Tell one of the ministers, just tell him, "I'm trusting Jesus, I'm trusting Jesus." We want to give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions, seal your decision in prayer. Now, there are others of you who need a church home. I want to invite you to come and place your membership here. Now, we're not looking for joiners, as such. We're looking for brothers and sisters in Christ who want to be a part of this family of friends, people who want to love and live and serve and grow in the fellowship of this church. If you believe as we believe, this is where God speaks to your heart, lovingly, I invite you to step out and come down one of these aisles and just tell

the minister that you want to place your membership here, and he'll tell you how you may become a member of this family of friends, this church of the Lord Jesus Christ called Bellevue. Some are coming, saying, "I am trusting Jesus to save me." Others are coming, I trust, saying, "I want to place my membership here." Let's stand together as we sing.

# Financial Faithfulness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 26, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 16:1–13**

*“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*

LUKE 16:13

## Outline

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## Introduction

Amen. Thank God for His mercy.

Find Luke chapter 16. And when you've found it, look up here. We are coming into a time in our church entitled, "Frontiers of Faith." You can see it emblazoned here on the walls. You saw it when you came in to the grounds today. You see it on the church newsletter that is in your hands. And the "Frontiers of Faith" is the theme for this year's love offering.

Now, when I talk to you about a love offering, I'm talking to you about something that is a very sensitive subject to everybody, and that is money. The most sensitive nerve in the human body is the one that runs from the heart to the pocketbook and back again. And, you say, "Well, Pastor, I'm not interested in money." Well, first of all, I don't believe

you, and, secondly, even if you are not interested in money, I can tell you, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that God is interested in your money, because it is really not your money; it is His. You're His sheep. And the One who owns the sheep owns the wool. Say amen. The One who owns the sheep owns the wool. And God is interested in how you secure your money. God is interested in how you save your money. God is interested in how you spend your money. And God is interested in how you share your money. As a matter of fact, God is going to measure you by your use of finances. That's the index according to the way that God can trust you and bless you.

Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 16, beginning in verse 10. Now, watch it. "He that is faithful in that which is least..." And you're going to find out that He's going to call money that which is least. Now, to many of us that's the most important thing, but God says, "Oh, that's not the big thing." "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much..." In a moment, we're going to find out what much is, because what God calls much a lot of people call little. "...and he that is unjust in the least," and we're going to see He's talking about money, "is unjust also in much." Now, we're going to find out what the much is in just a moment. Now, watch this: "For if ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, unrighteous mammon, is that which is least—unrighteous mammon speaks of material goods. Mammon was the god of materialism, and He calls it here unrighteous mammon—who will commit into your trust the true riches? And if you've not been faithful in that which is another man's—you see, everything we own really doesn't belong to us. We're just stewards. It belongs to Jesus—who will give you that which is your own?"

Now, what God wants to do it to give you true riches. Most folks just want more money, but God says, "Oh, no. Money is only a test. It's only the way I test you. It's only an index of your faithfulness." And if you can learn to be faithful with your money, God says, "I'll give you something that really matters because money is not all that important." It's not that much. So learn this: money itself is not evil. Who made the gold? Who made the silver? Who made everything? God did. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. God made it. So don't think that money is evil. Money is not evil. If you have some, I'm happy for you. Here's what the Bible says, however, and put this in your margin—1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil—and literally in the Greek, all kinds of evil. It comes out of the love of money—which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith—not only have they gotten away from God—and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Money itself is not evil. In the hands of a good man, money can feed the hungry. In the hands of the faithful, money can give, drink to the one who is thirsty. In the hands of a good person, money can be used to pay for medicine to heal the sick and the cloth the naked. Money can be a wonderful servant. Money, rightly used, can help us to spread

the gospel around this world and tell the glorious news that Jesus saves that we just sang about. So money is not evil.

Now, here our Lord is going to give us a strange parable. Just stay open there in Luke chapter 16. It's one of the strangest parables in all of the Bible. I'm going to read the first 9 verses of Luke 16. And at first this, this parable will cause you to wonder, is that really in the Bible? Look at it. "And he said also unto his, his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward—now, a steward is somebody who manages somebody else's affairs, especially his finances—and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods—that is, here was a steward who was not a good steward—and he called him—the rich man called the steward—and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest no longer, thou mayest be no longer a steward." And one of these days, every one of us is going to hear God say the same thing to us, "Give an account of your stewardship."

Now, folks, I'm telling you as sure as I'm standing here we are going to have to give an account for those resources that God has put into our hands. "...Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest no longer be steward." One of these days, our stewardship is going to end, is it not? "Then the steward—now, remember, this steward was a crook. Now, listen. This crook said within himself, "What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship. I cannot dig—he's too lazy to get a job digging a ditch—to beg I'm ashamed—so he's too lazy to work, too proud to beg—I am resolved to do that, when I am put out of the stewardship, that they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty."

Now, notice what he's doing. He knows he can't be steward anymore and he's too lazy to dig, too proud to beg, but not too proud to steal. So he says to his, master's debtor, "You owe my debtor a hundred measures. Just write down fifty. We'll split, the two of us, what is left." And, notice verse 7: "Then said he unto another, how much owest thou? And he said, an hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, take thy bill and write fourscore." That is, "Write 80. You and I'll, we'll divvy up the other 20 that's left." Now, the rich man found out what was going on. Now, here's the most, here's, here's the hardest part of this parable to understand. "And the lord commended the unjust steward..." Now, the lord here is not the Lord God Almighty in heaven. He's the lord of the house, the rich man, and he's got this man who's been cheating him, and he commends him because he had done wisely. The word wisely doesn't mean with godly wisdom; it means he was shrewd. And notice he explains it. "...for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

Now, that's the parable. If somebody were to read this casually, they'd think that

somewhere the Bible is telling us to be shrewd, to be crooked, to cheat those that we work for. He's telling us not that at all. Don't get that idea. But what is He telling us? Verse 9 tells us what He is telling us. "And I say unto you—here's what He's saying unto you—Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness..." Now, what this man had been doing, this crook, he'd been making friends for himself. He'd been getting in cahoots with other crooks. Jesus said, "Now, listen to what I'm telling you. You take the mammon of unrighteousness, that's money, that's what He calls money, and make friends to yourselves, make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, "that, when ye fail—that is, when you check out, when you're going to heaven, when you can no longer be a steward—they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Now, this crook made plans for the future, so that when he could no longer be steward, they would receive him into their house. Jesus said, "Now, let me make an application to you. Don't let the children of this world be more shrewd than you are wise. You take what God has put into your hands. You make friend for God. You win souls to Jesus. And when you die, they'll welcome you into heaven." That's what He's saying. You make some friends up in the glory. You have some people waiting on you.

Now, we often hear people say, "You can't take it to heaven. You can't take it with you." Well, in a sense that's true, but I'll tell you what you can do. You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead. And the only way you can send it on ahead is to invest it in something that's going to heaven. And the only thing going to heaven is not houses, lands, cars, stocks and bonds, but the souls of men. So if you take the, the, the money that you have and you make plans for the future, and you invest your money in something that is going to heaven, then when you die and go to heaven, they're going to say, "Welcome home. Oh, I'm so glad to see you. I'm here because of your faithfulness." That's what the parable is all about. Now, it's a strange parable, but a wonderful parable.

Now, let's go back again and see what He says in verses 10 through 13, and I'll just kind of restate them without rereading them. God says, "If you're not faithful with unrighteous, the unrighteous mammon, if you haven't been a good steward there with money, if you haven't been faithful in that which is least, you're not going to be faithful in that which is much. If you haven't been faithful in material things, you're not going to be faithful in spiritual things." There is no such thing as a man who is faithful in spiritual things and not faithful in financial things, no such thing. If he's not faithful in that which is least, he's not faithful in that which is much. The least—the money; the much—our relationship with God.

Now, He's saying this also: "If I can't trust you with money, I won't be able to trust you with real riches. Now, most of us just want more money, but what we need is more of God, more true riches, more of what really counts, what more, what will really, really,

truly endure forever and ever and ever and ever. But what our Lord is saying is, “Look! I’m giving you your money. You are a steward and you are being tested. You’re being tested by what you have in the bank, what you have in your resources, those things that you call your own. They’re not yours. They belong to me. I own them all. You’re just my steward and I’m testing you. And if you are not faithful with that, I can’t really give you the true riches.” So what you do with your finances is an index of how God wants to bless you with true spiritual riches. If you’re unfaithful in the lesser, you certainly will be in the greater.

Now, how can you tell whether or not money is your master? How can you tell whether you are infected with a disease called the love of money? May I give you some tests? Say yes. Okay. Thank you. All right.

#### **A. Do You Love Money? The Trust Test**

First of all, the trust test. Write it down. The trust test or the faith test. Are you trusting in uncertain riches? Now, if you’re trusting in riches, friend, you’ve got your eyes on the wrong thing. Are you trusting? Answer it now in your heart. Are you trusting what your money can do, or are you trusting what God can do? Let me give you a couple of verses. Proverbs 11, verse 4: “Riches profit not in the day of wrath...” One of these days, the wrath of God is going to be poured out upon this world, and if you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ, I’ll guarantee you you’ll not rip off a few thousand dollars and bribe God. “Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivereth from death.” Another Scripture: Proverbs 11, verse 28: “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall...” Now, friend, that is a warning as clear, as plain as anything in the Bible. Are you trusting in your money? You are going down. Now, I’m talking to a lot of people, and I’ll talk to some on television. You’re trusting in your money. Now, the faith test.

#### **B. Do You Love Money? The Priority Test**

Second test, the priority test—the priority test. What are your goals in life? Really, what melts your butter? What sweetens your tea? What thickens your gravy? What motivates you? What are your goals in life? Are your goals primarily financial or are your goals spiritual? Are you looking forward to retirement? Paying off your house? Getting a new car? Having enough larded down that you don’t have to worry about the future? Now, we’re going to see in a moment that God wants you to save money and invest money. But what consumes you? What is the great priority in your life? I’ve met some men who have resigned a higher paying salary to have a lesser salary that they might spend more time with their children.

Now, that speaks to me of priority. What are your priorities? Is your goal to have enough to impress other people? To have the finest house? To satisfy your pride? To gain power? To become secure? Sometimes we hear, people speak at, graduation

exercises, and this is always the line that seems to sound so good, “Make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly.” Now, it sounds so good. That’s ridiculous. That’s ridiculous. No man, no woman, no young person has, should have as a goal to make all the money they can, even if they make it honestly. Why? Because when they’re making money, if they’re making all they can, they’re going to be making money when they ought to be doing something else. They might be making money when they ought to be resting or exercising. They might be making money when they ought to be spending time with their children. They might be making money when they ought to be having a quiet time, studying the Word of God or working through some ministry that God has laid on their heart. No. You don’t make all the money that you can. That’s idolatry. The Bible says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” A man who’s making all the money he can is seeking first money. The priority test.

### **C. Do You Love Money? The Stewardship Test**

Another test, the stewardship test. May I ask you a question? Don’t answer it out loud because it’ll be too convicting. Is there anything in your possession you would not gladly part with if God asked for it? Is there anything in your possession that you would not gladly part with if God asked for it, anything that you would not gladly part with for the glory of God? Remember that you don’t really own anything; it all belongs to Him and He has every right to ask for it if He wishes.

### **D. Do You Love Money? The Admiration Test**

Next test, the admiration test. Who and what do you admire? Had you rather be spending more time with the Wall Street Journal, the Forbes magazine, Business Weekly than the Word of God? Hey, if you could invite somebody to your house for a meal, which, which would you rather have—Bill Gates or Stephen Olford? I mean, who do you admire the most? Are you more impressed with the lives of the rich and the famous or the godly and the people who serve God? Who do you admire? Friend, the admiration test.

Now, let me tell you some marks of a good steward, okay? All this is just introduction, so the sermon going to have to be short. All right. Now, listen.

## **I. Learn How to Secure Money**

First of all, you need to learn how to secure money. In Luke chapter 16, verses 1 and 2, the Bible makes it plain that we are stewards. I’ll not read all of that passage of Scripture, but we are stewards. And the Bible teaches us that as stewards we are to handle the, our master’s resources. The Bible is not against making money through honest work. The Bible is not against, investing. As a matter of fact, stewardship is that area of life where men make money and women make money and God makes men and

women. God wants you to prosper. Now, don't get the idea that the Bible teaches that to be poor is a virtue. Now, every now and then I hear this preached. You know, to be poor, oh, that's a virtue. Well, if that is a virtue, the first thing you need to do is get rid of everything you own, and the next thing you need to do is to try and make everybody else as poor as they can be. I mean, you think about it. Do you think that that's a virtue, to be poor? Then it is our goal, it is our duty, it is our responsibility to divest ourselves of everything that we own and then, number two, to try to make everybody else as poor as we can make them. Well, think about it. No, no, no, no, no. The Bible teaches just to the contrary. Psalm 35, verse 27: "Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause. Yeah, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." God has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant. Read Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 18: "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth..." Now, God is, wants you to prosper. He wants you to learn how to make money. But be careful.

#### **A. Don't Make Money at the Expense of Life or Health**

Don't make money at the expense of life or health. The Bible tells us in Psalm 127, verse 2: "It's vain for you to rise up early, to stay up late, to eat the bread of sorrows..." You're burning the candle at both ends. Some people spend the first half of their life, making all the money they can and destroying their health. Then they spend the second half of their life using the money they made to try to restore their health. And they're unhappy in both halves. Now, yes, don't do it at the expense of life or health.

#### **B. Don't Make Money at the Expense of Your Character**

And, number two: Don't make money at the expense of your character. Don't get into some business that is an ungodly business, no unfair business practices, nothing that transgresses the law of God or the law of man. Gambling, for example, is an economic fraud. All true business, and I want to say, Mr. Mayor, if you're listening, or anybody else is listening, want to turn the casino, the Pyramid into a casino, we need a casino in Memphis, Tennessee like a duck needs a bathing suit. What we need is good, honest business. All business is win-win. Gambling is win-lose. You can't have winners without losers. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out. The Bible's in favor of business, but don't get in the business of, of gambling. Don't get in the business of pornography, peddlers of filth. Don't get in the business of alcohol, poisoning the minds of young people and adults. The liquor business is brewed with tears, thickened with blood, flavored with death, and the curse of God is on it. We've had America liquorized. The Bible says, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor to drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, that maketh him drunken..." That's the Word of God—Habakkuk 2, verse 15. Make money, but don't make money at the expense of character.

### **C. Don't Make Money at the Expense of Higher Values**

And also, not at the expense of higher values. What are you leaving your children? You say, "Well, I want to leave them a big bankroll." My dad did not leave me a big inheritance. As a matter of fact, it was quite small. And Joyce and I took what that was and divided it and gave it to the grandchildren and children. But I'll tell you what my dad did leave me—character. I never worried about my dad being a crook. I never thought about my dad walking off from my mother. I saw my dad go to work Monday morning with a smile on his face, come home and love his children. And I learned from him something of a work ethic. And I want to tell you, you're looking at a man who has a rich inheritance. My dad did not sacrifice character on the altar of so-called success. Now, learn, friend, how to secure money.

## **II. Learn How to Save Money**

Number two: Learn how to save money. Look again, if you will, in Luke chapter 16, verse 8: "And the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely; for the children of this world, are in their generation wiser than the children of light." The children of this world, many times, are wiser in the fact that they save money. Now, the Bible teaches the saving of money, but the Bible does not teach hoarding. We've to plan for the future and we're to save for the future. Let me give you some Scripture. Proverbs chapter 6, verses 6 through 8: "Go to the ant, thy sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise. Which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat, her food in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest." That is, when the ant can, the ant lays by food for the hard times that are coming. And the Bible says if you're lazy, go let a little ant teach you.

Now, don't spend all that you earn. You are to save money. Proverbs chapter 21, verse 20: "There is treasure to be desired, and oil, in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man spendeth it up." Do you have some reserves? Go to the ant. Be wise. Don't spend all that you have.

One of our senior saints here at Bellevue Baptist Church called me aside one time and said, "Pastor, I want to tell you what Dr. Lee said to me when I was a young lady, and that's many, many years ago. Dr. Lee said, 'Listen, if you make \$20 a week and spend a nickel more than you make, you are a failure. If you make \$20 a week and save a nickel and spend a nickel less than you make, you are a success.'" Don't spend all that you have.

Now, we're not to hoard money. We're to save according to our need, not according to our greed. James speaks of people who hoard money. Listen to what James said, James chapter 5, verses 1 through 3: "Go now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted; your garments are moth-

eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days.” One of these days at the judgment, rusty riches will testify against those who have not saved money, but they have hoarded money. The word here that James uses for treasure is the word we get our word thesaurus from. It means a collection. Some people just collect money like they collect trading stamps or like they, not trading cards, or they collect memorabilia or whatever. They don’t use their money for what God wants their money used for. Sure, you’re to save some money. The Bible is not opposed to your being rich. Abraham was rich. David was rich. Joseph was rich. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were all well-to-do people. Barnabas was rich. But what is spoken of here by James is the ruthless hoarding up of money so that, when you die, you’re going to be the richest fool in the cemetery. Have enough. Determine what is enough. Don’t stop making money. But then, use your money for the glory of God and the spread of the gospel around the world.

I serve on the board of Focus on the Family, and I love Jim and Shirley Dobson. One time at one of our board meetings, James Dobson told a story. It was humorous to me because I love to play Monopoly with my grandkids. And, he said one night, he said, we were playing monopoly, and he said, “I had cornered the market.” He said, “I had Boardwalk. I had Park Place. Pennsylvania Avenue. I had all the greens. I had all the reds. Then I got the yellows.” He said, “I even got down, you know, to Baltic and everything else. I had the whole thing, and I was stacking up \$500 bills one by one.” He said, “The game got late. One by one, other people would fold. I was sitting there so big and proud and I was king of the hill. I had just done it all. And one by one, it was getting late, they’d just sigh and kind of look at me with a kind of a look that you look at the winner with, got up and went to bed.” And he said, “Finally, it dawned on me I’m sitting there by myself with my pile of money. Everybody else has gone to bed. There’s all the cards and everything spread out on the table.” He said, “I’m there by myself, nobody in the family liking me,” and he said, “And I put it all in the box and went to bed.” Friend, I’m going to tell you something. Some of you rich guys, you’re going to end up alienating your entire family and you’re going to sit there alone, put it all in the box, and then you’re going to go to bed; I mean, they’re going to put you to bed with a shovel, and it’ll be over. That’s the person who is hoarding money.

Now, you save money. God wants you to save money...and you ought to save money. You know what Larry Burkett said? This is an astounding thing, but Larry Burkett ought to know. He said, “The average American is worth less money at the age of 65 than he was at 25.” Think about it. People don’t know how to save money. You need to save money.

### **III. Learn How to Spend Money**

You need to learn how to secure it. You need to learn how to save it. You need to learn how to spend it. Again, the Bible teaches in Luke 16, verse 8, that you're to be wise, and you're to be wise in your spending of money. As a matter of fact, if you were to let somebody examine your cancelled check stubs, it might be an indication of your wisdom and your faithfulness. More marriages are in trouble because of financial difficulty perhaps in almost any other thing. And it is attitude, not circumstances, that determine whether or not you're going to get a loan, along. Listen. If you can't manage at your present salary, you're not going to manage if you get a raise because your attitude is going to cause your expenses to escalate. And if little is not enough, nothing is going to be enough.

Now, I'm not a financial advisor—we have some out here—but I can tell you some things, right now, very quickly, about, spending money.

#### **A. Beware of Credit Buying**

Number one: if you're in debt, if you're over your head, beware of credit buying. You need plastic surgery. Cut up those cards. Don't look to the false god of credit. You say, "Well, Pastor, I'm already out of control. What should I do?" Well, again, let me tell you what to do. I'm not a financial advisor, but don't any more money. Designate everything possible to debt retirement, except borrow for the absolute necessities. And one of those absolute necessities is the tithe. Number three: You just sell all the items that you have you don't need. I don't care what it is. Just take a loss if you have to take a loss, but sell, sell, sell. Get rid of stuff rather than paying that exorbitant interest. If you have a \$20 to \$30,000 car, get rid of it, even if you have to take a loss, and get a \$2 or \$3,000 car that'll give you transportation. Begin to pay yourself rather than others. Cut your own grass. Don't go out to eat as much. Live a life of frugality. And go to those that you owe and tell them what you're doing and say, "Have patience with me and I will pay you." Get out of debt. Beware of, credit buying.

#### **B. Beware of Impulse Buying**

Number two: beware of impulse buying. Buy things according to your need, not your greed. Proverbs 13, verse 4: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing..." First Timothy 6:8: "And having food and raiment therewith be content." That's the reason you need a budget. A budget is a way of you telling your money what to do and where to go instead of your dollars telling you, asking for what they want.

#### **C. Beware of Ego Buying**

Next, beware of ego buying. Don't buy things that you don't need just for your ego. Your friends will get a bigger house. Then you'll have to have a bigger house. You have to have, your jeans have got a certain insignia on them, and when you play golf, you're

got to have a certain deal on your shirt, and all that. That's all ego. That's all ego. It's not going to make anybody love you anymore. It's just going to feed your rotten pride, that's all it is. And about the time you get a house like your neighbor's house or your friend's house, then they're going to get a bigger one, and you're going to go off again. We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like. Beware of ego buying. Listen, friend, learn how to spend your money.

#### **IV. Learn How to Share Money**

Now, next, learn how to share money. We're coming down to the end. Learn how to share money. God is interested in how you secure your money. God is interested in how you save your money. God is interested in how you spend your money. And God is interested in how you share your money.

Now, here's the import of the entire parable. Look again in verse 9: "And I say unto you..." This is what Jesus is saying. Listen to it. "...make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail—and, friend, you will fail. One of these days, you're going to turn up your toes and die—they may receive you into everlasting habitations." How do you do that? Number one: You begin with the tithe. "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase." You say, "Pastor Rogers, Pastor Rogers, you're just, you're just trying to get me to give more money to the church." Well, I'm trying to get you to give more money to God, I really am. You know, tithing really just shows our faith. The Bible says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I'll not open you the windows of heaven and pour ye out a blessing, there shall not be room enough to receive it." Aren't you a reasonable person? Nod your head. You say, "I'm reasonable, pastor." Well, now, listen. Would you not agree that anybody who believed that verse would tithe? Anybody who believeth that verse would tithe. "Bring all the ti, tithes into the storehouse. Prove me. Put me to the test, if I'll not open you the windows of heaven and pour ye out a blessing, and you not do, have room enough to receive it." Now, if you don't tithe, may I submit to you, as sweetly as I can, you don't believe the verse. You don't believe the verse. It's just that simple. If you believed it, you would. You say, "Well, Pastor, do you want these little widows who just live on a pension check to tithe?" Of course I do! Why? Because they can do more with nine tenths and God as a partner than they can do with ten tenths by themselves, that's why. God doesn't need your money. Good night! He owns the whole world. What God wants is to say, "My child, trust me."

I've heard this over and over again, "Well, tithing, that's Old Testament. In the New Testament, God owns it all." Friend, in the Old Testament, He owns it all. There's never been a time when He didn't own it all. He owns it all. Tithing is just an indication of our

faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, it was under the law.” Tithing was taught before the law, during the law, and after the law. Anybody who’d let a Jew do more under law than he’d do under grace is a disgrace to grace. No. Start with a tithe. And then go beyond the tithe. Say, “Lord, what do you want me to give to the love offering, to the “Frontiers of Faith?” You pray and ask God what He wants you to give because you’re going to hear a lot about this. And you’ve heard me say it, and you’ll hear me say it many times before the Love Offering in November, what you do not cheerfully and liberally give—listen, precious friend—God neither needs nor wants. Okay. You say, “Oh, I don’t want anybody to twist my arm.” If somebody comes twisting your arm, you come tell me and I’ll tell Jesus on them. I want you to go to God about it, that’s what I want. I want you to learn how to be faithful in the unrighteous mammon so that God Almighty can put in your hands true riches.

## Conclusion

Now, you can swell up like a poisoned pup and say, “I went to church and all they preached about was money.” You got that right. But I challenge anybody to come up and tell me I’ve not preached the Bible today. And I’m not trying to say this is what I want. This is what I want to do. And I’m not asking you to do anything that I don’t believe in and don’t practice.

In this same 16th chapter of Luke, Jesus tells about a rich man who died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment. I imagine at his funeral, it must have been some kind of funeral. Had it been today, there’d been a lot of BMWs, Mercedes, and Cadillacs, and Town Cars parked out in front. The mayor may have been there. Other people were there, his business partners, say, “What a great successful man he was.” And in hell, he will lift up his eyes, being in torment. “What should it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what should a man give in exchange for his soul?”

You say, “Pastor, if I give some money, will it get me to heaven?” No sir. You’re saved by the grace of God. That’s it. Nobody can bribe God. Nobody can buy his way into heaven. In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. But how sad for a man to have billions in the bank and nothing in his heart. How sad to rise in the judgment and meet a God that you do not know because somehow you put your trust in riches rather than in Him.

Do you want God to give you true riches? He’s giving you a test. It’s called unrighteous mammon. It’s a test. That’s all there is, just a test. And if you don’t pass that test, you’re not going to get the true riches. That’s what it teaches. And all God’s people said... amen.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. And if you’re not saved, friend, it doesn’t matter how

much you have in the bank, you need to be saved. And if you're not saved, it doesn't matter how poor you are. You can be saved. There's no way you can buy salvation. It's a gift. You receive it by faith. Would you pray a prayer like this: Lord Jesus, thank You that, though You were rich, You became poor that through Your poverty I might be rich. Thank You that You died for me, that You shed Your precious blood for me on the cross that I might be saved. Lord Jesus, spiritually I'm a pauper, no matter how much I have financially. I'm a pauper. I come to You, Lord, and trust You to save me. Jesus, I need You. I want You. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Pray that from your heart. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then thank Him for doing it. Say, I thank You for doing it. I claim it by faith. I stand on Your Word. You cannot lie. You are my Lord and my Savior from henceforth. And all that I am and I have belongs to You because I give myself back to You. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, here's what I'm going to ask you to do. We're going to stand and sing an invitation hymn, and I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward in this service. Your coming forward will be your way of openly and publicly saying, "I'm giving my heart to Jesus Christ." Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a minister to welcome you when you come. For those of you who'll be coming from the balcony, a man will be standing under that banner over here in that corner that says Redeemer, this one over here in this corner that says Messiah to welcome all of you coming from the balcony. And today, if you prayed that prayer with me, or you prayed it some other time and you need to make it public, I want you to come and say to the minister, "I'm trusting Jesus." We'll rejoice with you, give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions we can answer, and seal it in prayer. From all over the building you just do. Don't look to see what anyone else is going to do. You be the first one down here if you can. And if you're with a friend who needs to make a decision, you can volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful that is.

There are others of you here today who need a church home. And I'm going to ask you, if you know that you're saved and need a church home and this is where God speaks to your heart, I'm going to ask you to come forward and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here." One thing I know is those who will come for church membership on a day we preach on stewardship will mean business. That's good. And you're coming, saying, "Yes, I want to be a part of this church." I'm going to invite you to come right now.

Let's stand together as we sing. You step out and come.

# Financial Faithfulness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 26, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 16:1–13**

*“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*

LUKE 16:13

## Outline

### Introduction

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## Introduction

Praise Him. Praise the Lord. Amen. Thank God for mercy.

Be finding in the Gospel of Luke chapter 16—Luke chapter 16. And when you've found it, look up here. Let me tell you that I am going to speak to you today about something you are interested in. You know what it is? Money. Now, if you say you're not, I'm not going to believe you. The most sensitive nerve in the body is the one that runs from the heart to the pocketbook. You're interested in money, and you ought to be. And I'll tell you why you ought to be: because God is interested in your money. If you don't believe that, just pick up the Bible and read it. God is interested in how you secure your money. God is interested in how you save your money. God is interested in how you spend your money. And God is interested in how you share your money. And so

we're going to be talking about at, about that today because we're entering into a program called, "Frontiers of Faith." Now, we've been talking about forty days of purpose, but forty days of purpose are leading us into new frontiers, and God is not finished with Bellevue. Bellevue is pushing back the frontiers. And every frontier that we conquer, it must be a frontier of faith. And faith includes all of life, especially the financial aspects. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, can't we just separate the two? Can't we just have faith without, finances?" I'm sorry about that, but it is not so, that we are stewards of Almighty God, and God is interested in our finances.

Now, look, if you will, in Luke chapter 16 and let's look in verse 10. Would you like to find out whether you're a faithful person, a frontier of faith? Well, here it is: ". "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much..." Now, let me ask you a question: what is the least that He's talking about here and what is the much? He's calling something least and He's calling something much. It may surprise you to know that the least is money, finances. He's saying, "Hey, that's really not a big deal. That's, that's small potatoes," that which is least. Now, "He that is faithful in that which is least—that is, finances—is faithful also in much..." What is the much? Well, the much is spiritual wealth. "...and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Now, notice verse 11: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, unrighteous mammon..." Mammon was the god of greed or the god of wealth. If you've not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, "...who will commit into your trust the true riches." That is, if you haven't been faithful in that which is least, who's going to give you that which is really real riches, spiritual riches? Now, notice verse 12: "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give to you that which is your own?"

Now, a steward is somebody who handles the affairs of somebody else. And everything that you have really doesn't belong to you. It belongs to another man. His name is Jesus. When somebody owns the sheep, He also owns the wool. Are you a sheep? Do you belong to the Good Shepherd? Then the shepherd who owns you, He also owns your wool. So He says this: "If you've not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give to you that which is your own?"

Now, God wants to bless you. God has indescribable blessings. God wants to open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, there should not be room enough to receive it. But God is going to give you a test. God is going to put some resources in your hand, and He's going to say, "That's a small thing. Now, I'm going to stand back and see how you handle the small thing, how you handle the unrighteous mammon. And if I see you being faithful in that, then guess what I'm going to do? I am going to open the windows of heaven and I'm going to pour out upon you the real riches. If you have been faithful in that which is least, get ready—I'm going to bless you with that

which is much.” Now, that’s what it’s all about.

Now, we’re going to read a very strange parable. When you read this parable, you’re going to say, “Is that in the Word of God?” This is a parable that could be easily misunderstood, but it’s a parable that has a great, great lesson to it. Now, I just kind of read to you the conclusion of the parable in verses 10, 11, and 12, but let’s get the parable itself. Now, take your Bibles. We’re in Luke chapter 16, and let’s look at it. “And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward...’ Now, what is a steward? A steward is somebody who handles the riches and the goods of somebody else. He’s not the owner’ he’s only the manager. So here’s a rich man who has a financial manager. “And the same—that is, the steward—was accused unto him—accused unto the rich man—that he had wasted his goods.” That is, the steward was a crook. The steward had not been a good steward. He took the rich man’s goods and he wasted them. “And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship...” That is, “Bring the books in here. We’re going to look and find out really how you’ve been handling my riches.” “...that thou mayest, for thou mayest no longer be steward.” That is, “You don’t have a job with me anymore. I can’t trust you anymore. Bring the books in here. We’re going to check up and see really how you’ve handled what I’ve put into your care.” Now, notice verse 3: Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship...” That is, “This has been my source of income, what I have been able to be paid and then to rake off on the side, and now no longer do I have this fat job.” So here’s what he said, “I cannot dig—that would be beneath me. I’m too lazy to do that], and then to beg I’m ashamed.” So he’s too lazy to work and too proud to beg. So he’s got to do something else. “I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.” Who is the they? He’s saying, ‘I can go hang with some other people.’ Who are these people? This man says, “When I don’t have employment anymore, I’m going to have some people who are going to take care of me.” So notice what he did. “So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou my lord?” Now, this steward had been doing business with people for the rich man, so he calls in one of the people who, owed the rich man some money and said, “How much do you owe my boss?” Look in verse 6: “And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.” And so, we’re going to cook the books here now. “You owe him a hundred measures, but just write fifty—wink, wink—You know it’s fifty, you know it’s a hundred, I know it’s a hundred, but we’ll write down fifty and then we’ll take the other fifty and the two of us will divide it up.” Now, look in verse 7: “And he said to another, how much owest thou? And he said, an hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, take thy bill and write fourscore.” That ‘s 80. And, in other words, the idea

is that'll be 10% for you and 10% for me. We'll just split it. Now, that shows this man was a crook, a genuine crook. But now, here's the part that is hard to understand. Look, if you will, in verse 8: "And the lord—He's not talking about the Lord God now; He's talking about the rich man—And the rich man commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely..." Now, the word wisely, He's not talking about godly wisdom, but put in the word in your mind shrewdly. "...for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." When the boss found out what was happening, he said, "Well, I'll say one thing for that rascal. He certainly was shrewd because he was making plans for himself, he was planning for the future." Now, don't you get in your heart and mind for a New York second that our Lord here is telling people to be dishonest. Don't get the idea that the Lord here is talking about crooked stewardship with pleasure. No. What He is doing, He is showing how people of this world, shrewd in their business dealings, take more thought for the future sometimes than the children of God. Now, learn this about God. God is not against your having money and possessions. Again, the Lord is very interested in what you do, and money is not evil. Money is not wicked. It is the love of money that is wrong. Put in your margin 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil." And, literally, the Scripture says, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. If you get the love of money in your heart, you're headed for trouble. So our Lord gave this parable here to teach us how to be stewards of what God has put into our hands.

Now, what He said is this: This man planned for the future. Now, what's the application? Look at it. Look in verse 9: "And I say unto you..." Now, this is Jesus speaking. This is the Lord speaking now. He's already told what the rich man and the crooked steward had done, and now here what He's says to us. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the un, of the mammon of unrighteousness—that is, of your money—that when ye fail— that is, when you don't have a job as a steward anymore—they—the friends that you've made—may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Now, what did this crook do? This crook made some friends, and he said, "When I'm no longer the steward, they're going to take me in and I can live with them." What is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying, "Listen now. If the children of this world are that wise, that shrewd, what should a child of God do?" A child of God should look to the future. He needs to take the resources that God has put into his hands and he needs to make some friends. He needs to win some people to Jesus Christ. He needs to invest in the kingdom of heaven, because one of these days we're going to turn up our toes and die. And when we die and we go to heaven, we want there to be a welcome committee there in heaven. We want people to say, "Welcome home. Thank you, thank you, for giving to the Lord. Thank you for being faithful. And, and I am going to dwell with you as a friend

here in heaven.” “Make to yourselves friends with the unrighteous mammon, that when you fail—when you die—they are going to receive you into heavenly habitations.” You know, you hear people say, “Well, you can’t take it with you.” Well, you can’t take it with you, but I’ll tell you what you can do. You can send it on ahead. You see, you can send it on ahead, why, how? Well, you can invest it in something that’s going to heaven. And the only thing I know that is going to heaven are the souls of men. So if you take the unrighteous mammon that God has put into your hands and you invest it in eternity, bringing men, women, boys and girls to faith in Jesus Christ, think of the welcome when you get to heaven. Think of what it will be. Now, if the people of this world are so shrewd, so wicked, that they plan ahead for themselves, how much more should the child of God? And Jesus is saying, “Sometimes God’s children are not wise. They’re not even as wise as the people of this world. Why, the people of this world and their generation are wiser than the children of light.” And so what our Lord is saying here is, “I want you to be a good steward of what I have placed in your hands because, very frankly, I’m going to be watching what you do with your material goods. And if you haven’t been faithful in your material goods, hey, I can’t trust you with the real riches. It’s an index of how much I’m going to bless you spiritually what you do with what you have in your hand. If you are faithful in that which is much, you’re going to be, in that which is least, then you’ll be faithful in that which is much. I can trust you with a whole lot more. But if you haven’t been faithful in that which is least, I can’t give you that which is more.”

Now, do you want to find out whether or not you have the love of money in your heart? Do you want to find out whether or not you have a warped sense of values? Let me give you some tests.

#### **A. Do You Love Money? The Trust Test**

Number one is what I want to call the faith test or the trust test. What do you trust in? Are you trusting in money? If you’re trusting in money, that’s tragic because the Bible says we’re not to trust in uncertain riches. Do you find yourself visualizing and fantasizing about what money can do for you, rather than what God can do for you? Proverbs 11 and verse 4: “Riches profit not in the day of wrath...” Now, what does that mean? When you face Almighty God, do you think you can buy Him off? Do you think you can bribe the judge? You’ve been trusting in your money? In the day of wrath it’ll do you no good. Proverbs 11, verse 28: “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall...” Is that where your trust is? You say, “Well, I’ve got it all larded down.” No. You’re going down. You’re going to fall. “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall...” That’s the first test. Where is your trust?

## **B. Do You Love Money? The Priority Test**

Second test: what are your priorities? The priority test. What are the goals of your life, your personal goals? May I ask you this question: Answer it privately, but answer it. Are your major goals financial or spiritual? That's a simple question. What are you working for? Retirement? To pay off your house? To have a certain amount in the bank? To be able to pay the school expenses? To get out of debt? What are your goals? Are your goals primarily financial or are your goals spiritual? Well, let me ask you this question: Are you more interested in the character of your children or in their wealth and their financial security? Would you quit a job and take a reduced salary if it might mean that you could spend more time teaching your children how to be godly? What are your priorities. You know, sometimes a commencement speaker at graduation will say something like this, and it's generally applauded. People think it's good advice. He will say to the young people, "Now, just make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly." People say, "Well, that's good advice." That's bad advice. That's bad advice. Nobody has the right to be making all the money they can. Why? Because if you're making all the money you can, you're going to be making money when you ought to be doing something else. You're going to be making money when you ought to be spending time with your children. You're going to be making money when you ought to have some ministry through the church. You're going to be making money when you ought to be resting or praying or studying the Word of God. The Bible never says make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly. The Bible says what? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." God will not work in second place. And if you put things first and God second, you have the love of money and your priorities are wrong.

## **C. Do You Love Money? The Stewardship Test**

Now, not only the faith test and the priority test, but let me give you another test that'll find out where your heart is, and that is the stewardship test. May I ask you another personal question: Now, don't answer it out loud. But is there anything that you claim to hold possession to that you would not willingly surrender if God asked for it. Ask that question: Is there anything that you now claim to hold possession to that you would not willingly surrender if God asked you for it, that you would not gladly part with for the glory of God? Again, I remind you that you really don't own anything. It all belongs to Him, does it not? The One who owns the sheep owns the wool.

## **D. Do You Love Money? The Admiration Test**

Let me give you another test. It is the admiration test. What do you really admire? For example, what is your reading? Is it the Wall Street Journal, Forbes Magazine, Business Weekly? I'm not opposed to reading those things, but do you read that kind of

thing more than you read the Word of God? Now, who are your heroes? Well, let me put it this way. If you could have a guest for dinner, which of the two do you rather have—Bill Gates or Stephen Olford? I, I mean, who do you admire? Is it the lifestyle of the rich and the famous or the good and the godly? You see, this world has done a job on us. Where is our admiration? So many of us have, we're infected with something that the Bible calls the love of money, and the Bible says it is the root of all kinds of evil.

Now, having said that let me talk to you about four things.

## **I. Learn How to Secure Money**

First of all, God is interested in how to secure money. You need to learn how to secure money. In chapter 16, verses 1 and 2, the Bible calls us stewards. You are a steward. A steward is one who is an investor. He is one who is to make money and handle money for his master. Stewardship is that area of life where men and women make money and God makes men and women. God wants us to occupy. "Occupy till I come," Jesus said. What does, what does it mean to occupy? Not to take up space. You have an occupation. You have a job. Now, some people have the idea that a child of God is not supposed to make money. He's not supposed to prosper. Have you ever heard people teach and preach as though poverty is a virtue? Poverty is not a virtue. God loves the poor people, but poverty, per say, is not a virtue. If poverty is a virtue, then I have an assignment for you. As soon as you leave this service, get rid of everything you own as fast as you can, if it's a virtue. I mean, as soon as you get out here, just start, just divest yourself. And then, as soon as you do that, number two, begin to make everybody else as poor as you possibly can. I mean, if it's a virtue, if poverty is a virtue, number one, get rid of everything you have, number two, you endeavor to make everybody you know as poor as you can make them. No. God is not interested in poverty as a virtue. Let me give you some verses to the contrary. Psalm 35, verse 27: "Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause. Yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." God has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant. Again, Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 18: "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth..." God is the one who enables you to work. But remember, as you secure money, don't pay too high a price.

### **A. Don't Make Money at the Expense of Life or Health**

Don't be making money at the expense of life or health. The Bible says in Psalm 137, verse 2: "It is vain to rise up early, to stay up late, to eat the bread of sorrows." I go back to what I said—you're not just simply, trying to make all that you can. So many people sadly destroy their health trying to get wealth in the first part of their life, and in the second part of their life they spend the wealth they accumulated trying to get their

health back. And they're unhappy in both sides of their life. "It's vain to rise up early, to stay up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; He giveth his beloved sleep." Literally, He gives His beloved in their sleep. While you're asleep, God is up working for you if you're faithful.

### **B. Don't Make Money at the Expense of Your Character**

And don't gain money not only at the expense of your health and welfare, but at the expense of your character. Never sacrifice your character on the altar of wealth. Never participate in anything that is contrary to the law of God or the welfare of man. That's the reason that gambling is so wrong. I heard that the mayor of our city thinks it's a good idea to turn the Pyramid into a casino. Well, Memphis needs the Pyramid turned into a casino like a duck needs a bathing suit. Listen. You don't make money at something that's contrary to the law of God and the welfare of man. All good business is win-win. All gambling is win-lose. You can't have winners without losers. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out. You can't be in the business of pornography. These money-grabbing people from Hollywood and television, they don't care about the minds, the hearts, the souls of boys and girls. All they want is money. They're in the filth business. The same is true, friend, about the alcohol business, the beer barons, the liquor dealers. That business is brewed with tears, thickened with blood, flavored with death. It has the curse of God on it. The Bible says in the Book of Habakkuk, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor to drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, that maketh him drunken..." They have today liquorized society and everybody thinks it's just fine and good. Well, you're looking at a man that doesn't think it's fine and good.

### **C. Don't Make Money at the Expense of Higher Values**

Now, make money, but not at the expense of your character. And then, make money not at the expense of higher values. Don't sacrifice your, your family, your children. You don't have to leave your kids a great big legacy. Leave them some character. My dad didn't leave us a big, inheritance. When my dad died in his 90s, both my parents died in their 90s, so I expect to live a long time, hopefully, but my dad died. He didn't leave a big, legacy. He left enough to take care of my mama until she went to heaven. A small amount divided up among the four kids and other causes that they left their money to. We, we took that little inheritance and divided that out to our children and grandchildren. Joyce and I didn't keep any of it. But I'll tell you what my dad did leave me. He left me some character. My, I never had to worry about my dad leaving my mother. I never had to thought, think about my dad being unfaithful. I never had to worry about my dad getting drunk or using alcohol or tobacco or using bad language in the house. I learned from my father how to work and how to be self-reliant and how to be decent and to be honest. And, friend, I want to tell you, that is a legacy. That is a legacy to have a godly

father, a man of God as a father. Now, friend, don't gain your wealth at the expense of things that are greater. Learn how to secure money.

## II. Learn How to Save Money

Number two: Learn how to save money. Again, verse 8 tells us that we are stewards and we're to be wise. The Bible is in favor of saving money, not hoarding money. There is a difference between saving money and hoarding money and I'm going to explain that to you. You save to plan for the future, and the Bible teaches that you plan for the future and that you save. Let me give you a couple of verses. Proverbs chapter 6, verses 6 through 8: "Go to the ant, thy sluggard and consider her ways and be wise. Which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest." The ant is very wise. The ant knows in the summertime and harvest time it's time to gather grain, and so forth, to store that away because the cold, hard winter is coming. That is, the ant plans for the future. The Word of God teaches that we're to do the same thing. Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 20: "There is treasure to be desired, and oil, in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man spendeth it up." You spend all that you make. The Bible says you're foolish.

One of our senior saints here at Bellevue Baptist Church said, "Pastor, when Dr. Lee was here as pastor, he told me something. I was a young girl. This was many, many years ago. Dr. Lee said if you only make \$20 a week and you spend a nickel more than you make, you are a failure. But if you only make \$20 a week and you spend a nickel less than you make, you are a success." Learn to save money, but we're not to greedily hoard money. We are to save according to our need, not according to our greed. James spoke of those who don't just merely save money; they hoard money. They lard it down, salt it down. Listen. James chapter 5, verses 1 through 3. Listen to this: "Go now, ye rich men, and weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days." God says, "You fat cat. You're going to die. You didn't care about the things of God. You were just piling it up and piling it up. And one day, when you come to the judgment, rusty riches will come and testify against you."

Now, money is to be saved. The rest of it, after you see what is needed for the future, is to be used for the kingdom of God. God does not say, "When you get enough, you stop working." God does not say, "When you get enough, you stop investing." If God gives you money, you continue to invest it, continue to make it grow, and so forth. But what is the difference? You take what you need for your living expense. You take what you think is reasonable for your future that you're going to save and, perhaps, a

legacy for your children, and then you take the rest of it and you invest it for the kingdom of God. It is to be put in circulation. James says, “You’re treasuring up riches as a judgment.” The word he uses here for treasure is the word we get our English word thesaurus from, and what it literally means is a collection. People are just collecting money. They’re not really trying to meet their expenses; they’re just keeping store, score. They want to continue to, to, to grow and to have more and more, to get fatter and richer, and not caring for the people of this world. And, friend, that is a terrible, horrible mistake. And one of these days, you’re going to face the judgment if you’ve been one of those who have just simply collected money. Rather than saving money you have hoarded money and hoarded it for yourself. And when you die, your epitaph will be, in God’s sight, “The richest fool in the cemetery.”

I serve on the board of Focus on the Family. James Dobson is a good friend of mine and, as a matter of fact, this week I’ll be going to a board meeting, Focus on the Family, God willing. And, I remember at one board meeting, Dr. Dobson told an interesting story. He said that he was up one night, late at night, playing Monopoly with his kids. Now, you love Monopoly, I love Monopoly. I love to play with my grandkids and we play Monopoly, and so forth. Well, James said he was the big dog that night. I mean, he had it all. He had cornered the market. He had the board almost all the way around, hotels built on everything. He had Park Place, Boardwalk. He had Pennsylvania Avenue. He had all the greens, all the reds, all the yellows. He owned Baltic and the rest of these down there at the end, the little measly purple things. He had the whole deal. And he’s getting those \$500 bills from everybody—everybody. There was nowhere else to go. They roll the dice and land on him and he would wipe them out. Well, it was late at night, and they’d cash in and get up and kind of disgruntled look at him kind of upset and go to bed. Finally, he wiped out the last person and they got up and left. And he was sitting there late at night by himself, and he had all that stack of worthless money. He had all those hotels and all of those houses and all those things there, but he didn’t have a friend in the house. They were all perturbed with him, all upset with him, because he was there, the fat cat, and they’d all gone to bed. There he is all by himself. And so, he said, “Well, I’d better clean it all up,” and he put it all back in the box and put the lid on it. And, friend, I want to tell you something. Everything you think you own is going back in the box, and now, you remember this. Put it all back in the box and he went to bed with nobody in the family loving him. Now, they loved him, but you know how I’m using the word love, and went to bed. Nobody said, “Oh, isn’t Daddy wonderful.” And James said, “God spoke to me, and said ‘Jim, one of these days. You think you’ve got this or that. One of these days, son, you’re going to put it all back in the box and go to bed, only they’re going to put you to bed with a shovel.’” What really matters? What really counts, folks? Do we just treasure up things like a man winning a

Monopoly game? We think we're going to be the winner when really we are the loser. Now, there ought to be some reasonable goals. Indeed, you are to save money.

### **III. Learn How to Spend Money**

Now, God is also interested in how you spend your money. Again, 16:8 tells us that we're to be stewards and we're to be wise. And you need to be wise in how you spend your money. Many Christians are very foolish. Let me give you some things very quickly—I must rush on.

#### **A. Beware of Credit Buying**

I want to tell our young people, you beware of credit buying. Beware of the false god of credit. If you are paying, if you're paying exorbitant interest fees on credit cards, you're very foolish. That's about the nicest way I could say it. I mean, how would you like to find an investment, a sure investment today, where you could make 16, 18, 19, 21%? Well, the best investment you can get is to pay off those credit cards because that's what you're paying out. How would you like to stop paying that out? It would be the same as making it. There are a lot of kids in our church who need plastic surgery. Now, get rid of that stuff. I'm no financial advisor. You say, "But, Pastor Rogers, we're already upside down in credit debt." Well, let me give you advice.

Do not borrow any more money. Number two: designate everything possible as quick as you can to the paying down of that debt. Number three: you sell everything that you don't need to get out of debt. You say, "Well, I'll take a loss." Then take a loss at it. You say, "Well, I owe \$25,000 on this car and it's only worth \$19,000." Then get \$19,000 for it and take a hit and buy about a \$2,000 car, or whatever that can get you, back and forth, and just simply get out of debt as quick as you can and begin to live frugally. And go to your creditor and say, "Look, here's what I'm trying to do. I'll pay you." Listen, they had rather have you pay them something less and regular than to see you in jail. They want what they can get. The IRS will work with you.

#### **B. Beware of Impulse Buying**

And, number two, beware of impulse buying. Don't buy. Buy according to your, needs, not according to your wants. Build a budget and stick to it. Proverbs 13:4: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." First Timothy 6:8: "And having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." Do you have a budget, young people? Before you get married, it'd be good to sit down and, and work out a budget. A budget is a system of telling your dollars where to go, rather than wondering where they went. Many people don't, have no idea. Proverbs 27, verse 23: "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy folks and look well to thy herds." Now, you don't have flocks and herds, but it's saying your business.

### C. Beware of Ego Buying

Beware of ego buying. Just cause your friend's got a bigger house, you don't have to have a bigger house. They're not going to love you more. Just cause somebody has designer jeans, you don't have to have designer jeans. You don't have to have some insignia there on your shirt. That's not going to make you any better. We're trying to impress other people. It's all pride. Buying things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like. Why do you do that? Madison Avenue has done a job on us. Be careful how you spend your money.

## IV. Learn How to Share Money

Now, last of all. I wish I had more time about spending money. But, last of all, learn how to share money. Now, here's, here's the import of this entire parable. Now, look at it again. Look in verse 9: "And I say unto you..." Now, here are the words of Jesus. "And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Now, folks, what are we in the business here of, at Bellevue Baptist Church are doing? What are the "Frontiers of Faith?" We're in the business, ultimately, of glorifying God and bringing men, women, boys and girls to faith in Jesus Christ. That's what we exist for. And that's the reason we have "Frontiers of Faith." That's the reason we're going to have a love offering. That's the reason that you're going to participate because God wants us to learn how to share. It's better to give than to receive. And, friend, what I want you to do, listen, I want you to begin with the tithe. You say, "Well, Pastor, I don't believe in tithing." Well, I'm sorry for you. Let me give you a Scripture, Malachi 3:10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me now, herewith saith the lord of hosts, if I will not open you to windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, there shall not be room enough to receive it." That's in the Word of God, isn't it? Say yes. All right. Now, you're reasonable people. Let me ask you a question. If a man, a woman, a boy or girl, believe that scripture, would they tithe? Of course! I mean, of course, unless they're insane. God says, "Bring all the tithes to the storehouse. Put me to test and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing you won't even have room enough to receive it." Now, either that's true or it's not true. Now, if a man believes it's true, wouldn't he tithe? I mean, who does, who doesn't want a blessing. The only reason we don't tithe is we don't really, really believe it. If we believed it, we would do it. Now, don't give me that business of saying, "Oh, in the Old Testament, God owned the tenth and in the New Testament He owns it all." He always has owned it all—in the Old Testament, the New Testament. Tithing is taught, before the law, during the law, and after the law. And anybody who'd let a Jew under law do more than he'd do under grace is a disgrace to grace. No, you're not going to out-give God. Begin with a tithe. "Well, Pastor, do you

believe a little widow in our church who lives on a meager pittance, who lives on a pension, do you believe she ought to tithe?" Yes, especially she ought to tithe. Why? Because she needs God. She needs God. You see, the thing is, here's the secret. You can do more with nine tenths and God as a partner than you can do with ten tenths and yourself. Now, you say, "I don't believe it." Well, that's your right not to believe it. But I believe Malachi 3:10: "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me herewith, saith the lord of hosts, and I'll not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, there'll not be room enough to receive it." You say, "Pastor, are you trying to get me to do something you don't do?" No, friend. Joyce and I have given beyond the tithe all of our married life and God has blessed us. Don't be afraid to trust God with the tithe. Begin with the tithe. Go beyond the tithe to love offerings and gifts, because what God is doing, what God is doing is God is saying, "I'm going to give you a test now. I'm going to give you some finances. I'm going to put some material things in your hands, big or small. Here it is, and I'm going to be watching what you do with that. And if you've been faithful in that which is least," then God says, "I am going to bless you with that which is much. But if you've been unfaithful in the least, you will be unfaithful in that which is much, and I can't trust you." Never for a moment think that money is what you need. You need God. You need God. You need the one that owns the world.

In this same chapter in a few verses, Jesus tells the story of a rich man who died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment in hell. A rich man died. Now, can you imagine what his funeral must have been? If it had been today, can you imagine the BMWs, the Mercedes, the Lexus, the Town Cars that would be out front? Can you imagine the mayor saying, "Oh, what a wonderful citizen he was?" Can you imagine his business peers saying, "Well, he did this and he did that. What an entrepreneur he was." And he's in hell—in hell, in torment. You call that a successful man? Now, he wasn't in hell because he was rich. Some of God's greatest servants were rich. Abraham was rich. David was rich. Barnabas was rich. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were rich. No man goes to hell because he's rich. No man goes to heaven because he's poor. That's not the point. Here was a man who was trusting his riches rather than trusting Almighty God. Well, how tragic. How tragic to live your life not understanding what really counts, for Jesus said, "What should it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what should a man give in exchange for his soul?"

## **Conclusion**

May I give you some advice? Give your heart to Jesus. Trust Him. And once you trust Him as your Lord and Master, trust Him with all of the resources that you have. He knows your needs. He loves you. He wants you to prosper. God didn't make the

strawberries for the devil's crowd; He made them for God's crowd. God loves you. The Lord takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. But learn to trust Him. And learn that how you handle your finances is a test, pure and simply, as to whether God can begin to bless you with the real riches. And when you do that, you're coming to a frontier of faith. And we've talked all about the purpose-centered life, the Purpose-Driven life. We'll here's where the rubber meets the road.

Bow our heads in prayer. Every head bowed and every eye closed. And if you know that you're saved for certain, begin to pray for those round about you. And if you're not saved, or not certain that you're saved, I want to guide you in a decision service this morning, and you can pray and ask Christ to come into your heart. Now, I want to make it very clear nobody is lost because they're rich and nobody's saved because they are poor, and nobody can buy heaven. Heaven is a gift. You must receive it. And Jesus will save you right now, I promise, on the authority of the Word of God if you will receive His gift. Would you pray this prayer and sincerely pray it? Dear God, I am a sinner. I am lost. I'm headed for judgment and hell, but I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You right now. I receive You into my heart, into my life, as my Lord and Savior. Thank You that You shed your blood for me on the cross. Thank You that You were raised from the dead. I now put my faith in You, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord Jesus, and begin to make my life over anew. Not only do I receive You, but I give myself back to You to be your servant and to love You and serve You. In your holy name I pray. Amen.

Now, if you meant that prayer, here's what I'm going to ask you to do. In a moment, we're going to sing an invitational hymn. In a moment, the ministers of our church are going to stand at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to welcome those of you who'll be coming down the aisles. Any aisle you come down there'll be somebody waiting to receive you. Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be someone waiting to receive those who are coming from the balcony under the banner to my right that says Redeemer in that corner, or to the one to my left up there that says Messiah in that corner. You just move toward that way if you're coming to acknowledge Christ. And if you prayed that prayer with me this morning, or you still need some more help in praying that prayer, I want you to leave your seat and come and say to the minister, "I am trusting Jesus today," or, "I need some more help, but I want to trust Jesus." You put it in your own words. I think He'll understand why you've come. Any of you men on the football team—if you want to come, you just come. We'd be so happy that you did. "I'm trusting Jesus, I'm trusting Jesus." Well, what will happen? Number one: we'll rejoice. Number two: we'll give you some Scripture to stand on. Number three: we'll answer any questions we can answer. Number four: we'll seal it in prayer. It'll take just a moment. Be one of the greatest things you've ever done.

There are others of you who need a church home. You're saved and you know that you're saved, but you need a church home. Lovingly, I invite you to come forward at the same time these others are coming, and I want you to say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here." Now, I'm talking to those of you who already know that you're saved, and he'll tell you how you may become a member of this church. One thing I know, if you come on a Sunday when I preach on giving, I think you really mean business. You say, "I want to be a part of what God is doing in Bellevue. I want to be a part of the "Frontiers of Faith." Now, don't look around to see what someone else is going to do. You come if no one else comes. You come if all others do. Try to be the first one, if you can and lead the way for others.

Let's stand together and bow our heads in prayer. Let's stand with heads bowed. Now, Father God, I pray today that You'll be victorious. Don't let anybody go out of here without being convicted of their sin and without being challenged with the cross. And I pray, Lord, that today many will indicate their faith in You by coming forward. And, Lord, something about coming forward that seems to settle it and seal it. And I just pray now, Lord, that You will work in our hearts. In Jesus' name.

Now, you step out and come right now.

# You Can Take It with You

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 26, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 16:1–13**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Proper Assessment of Wealth
  - A. The Trust Test
  - B. The Priority Test
  - C. The Surrender Test
  - D. The Admiration Test
- II. A Proper Attainment of Wealth
- III. A Proper Assignment of Money

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Luke chapter 16, would you, please. And as you're finding that, that's a very interesting chapter with a very interesting parable in it about money and wealth and stewardship. I said that the most sensitive nerve in the human body runs from the heart to the pocketbook. And I said that somewhat in jest, but I know that you're interested in money. But you're not the only one interested in money. God is interested in your money. God is interested in how you secure your money, how you save your money, how you spend your money, and how you share your money.

And the Bible does not condemn money. The Bible condemns the wrong use of money and the wrong love of money, but the Bible certainly does not say that money is evil in itself. Who made the gold? Who made the silver? Who made the wealth? Almighty God did. The Bible says that *"the earth is the LORD's."* (Exodus 9:29; Psalm 24:1; 1 Corinthians 10:26, 28) Now, the Bible teaches that it is the love of money—the inordinate love of money—that is the root of all evil. (1 Timothy 6:10)

And let's read this parable here—it's a strange parable—beginning in verse 1: *"And he said also unto his disciples,"*—"he" refers to Jesus—"There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." And what was said to this man one day will be said to Adrian, to Bob, to Jim, to you: "Give an account of your stewardship." One of these days I as a steward of Almighty God am going to have

to account for what I've done with that which He has placed into my hands. Verse 3: *"Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore"—that's sixty. "And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you,"—now, here's Jesus speaking—"Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."* (Luke 16:1–13) Mammon is just another word for the god of wealth.

So we're going to be talking today about your money, your stewardship; and, really, the title of the message is "You Can Take It with You." Now, money can be good or evil. In the hands of the believer, money can be food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless. Money can be clothing for the naked. Money can send the gospel of Jesus Christ from this place around the world.

Jesus gave a parable to teach us something about the wrong and the right use of money. Here's the story. A man was a steward. Now, a steward is somebody who takes the wealth of another and handles it for him. And so, therefore, a steward is to be impeccably honest, because he is not dealing with that which is his own, but he's dealing with that which belongs to someone else. This particular steward was not a good steward. He was dishonest. He had failed. He had not managed his lord's assets very well. And so he's going to lose his job as a steward.

Now, he gets to thinking about the future. He says, "I'm not going to dig ditches. These lily-white hands are not going to dig ditches." And then he says, "And I can't beg: I am ashamed to beg." He wasn't ashamed to steal, as we're going to see in a moment. But he didn't want to be a beggar. He didn't want to be a ditch digger. So he began to think. He said, "What shall I do? I've got to make provision for the future." So he found

somebody who owed his lord a hundred measures of oil. And he said, “You owe a hundred measures. I’ll tell you what to do. Let’s just change the bill and say that you owe fifty measures of oil. And then you and I can divide up the rest.” He found somebody who owed a hundred measures of wheat. He said, “I’ll tell you what: Let’s just rewrite the bill. Nobody knows about this but we two. And so, let’s say that you owe eighty measures of wheat, and you and I will split the difference.”

Now, here’s an interesting thing that has caused many people consternation. Look in verse 8: *“And the lord commended the unjust steward.”* Now, *“the lord”*—that doesn’t refer to Almighty God. It refers to the lord of the household, the boss, the owner. He commended the unjust steward. He commended the crook. Now, he doesn’t commend his dishonesty. You’ve missed the point. He says to him, “Well, I give you credit for one thing: you’re acting shrewdly; you were acting wisely.” Look: *“The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.”* Now, this is worldly wisdom, ungodly wisdom, shrewdness. But he said, “You were one shrewd dude. Look what you did! You made provision for the future.” And then the lord said, *“for the children of this world…”*—listen to it—*“the children of this world”*—that is, the ungodly—*“are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”*

There’s a great lesson here for us. Now, what is the lesson? God is not—underscore it: not—exclamation point—not—commending dishonesty. What is He commending here? Here was a worldly wise man who is aiming steadily at a goal. He is bringing things into a burning focus. He’s saying, “I must make provision.” He is one who is looking ahead. He is saying, “When I don’t have a job anymore, I’ve got to have some friends, some buddies, some people with whom I am in cahoots who are going to receive me into their house and take care of me. I have got to get things together. I have got to make plans for the future.” And Jesus said, “You know, the people of this world do that in their generation. But the children of light, they fail to bring things into a focus sometimes. And they fail to make plans for the future.” And so Jesus said, “Listen: You use your money to make friends also—to make friends so that when you die they will receive you into heavenly habitations.”

You see, all of us are going to die, amen? You know, there’s a new statistic that has come out on death. One out of one people die. We’re all going to die. We’re all going to die. And when we die, we’re not going to stay here; we’re going to have to move on up; we’re going to heaven. And what the Lord is saying is, “Look to the future. Look to the future so that you can have a heavenly homecoming and there will be a great number of people who will say to you, ‘Thanks for giving to the Lord; thank you; I’m here because you were faithful; I’m here because you used your money to make friends out of me; I am now your friend because you brought me to the Lord Jesus Christ through your love,

your influence, your prayers, your witness, and your money; and now I want to welcome you home.” What a homecoming that will be! Don’t you want to meet some people in heaven that you helped to get there? Don’t you want people to say to you—besides the Lord—“Welcome home! Thank you! What a joy! What a privilege it will be to meet you in heaven!”? And what our Lord is saying is that you can take it with you if you invest it in the only thing going to heaven—and that is the souls of men. That’s the only way you can take it with you.

I heard about a man somehow who rigged a deal so he could take a suitcase full of gold to heaven. And so, when he got to heaven, he had this suitcase full of gold, and the angel who was checking him into heaven said, “What’s that in your hand?” He said, “Well, you know, I’ve got this suitcase of gold. They said I couldn’t take it with me, but I’ve got it right here.” The angel said, “Well, that’s kind of strange. Come on in. I don’t know what we’ll do with that extra pavement, but come on in.” You know, the streets in heaven are paved in gold.

Folks, listen. What you think is important down here is not going to be important up there. What’s going to be important up there are the souls of men. So we’re going to look a little bit into what the Bible has to say about wealth today. Now, listen very carefully, because we’re on the threshold of our annual Love Offering, and, very frankly, that’s why I’m bringing this message: because I want us to be thinking one more time about what God has put unto our hands. And God is interested in our assessment of wealth, what we think about wealth. And God is interested in our attainment of wealth—how we get wealth. And God is interested in our assignment of wealth—what we do with our wealth.

Now I want you to think about those three thoughts today, and I want you to apply them not to the person sitting next to you, but I want to apply them to your own heart. Whether you’re young or old, rich or poor, working or non-working, here are some things I want you to apply to yourself.

## **I. A Proper Assessment of Wealth**

Number one: You need to have a proper assessment of wealth. Look, if you will, in verse 13. Jesus sums all of this up by saying, “*No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, or love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*” (Luke 16:13) Let’s just put it in plain English: You can’t serve God and money. You can’t serve both. Either you serve money, or you serve God. But you cannot serve both. That’s what verse 13 says.

Well, let me give you a test to find out whether or not you’re serving God or whether or not you’re serving money. Would you like to take the test? Nod your head. Okay.

Good. All right now, I'll let you take the test in your heart, but let's just take a test and see whether or not it is God or money that is on the throne of your life.

### **A. The Trust Test**

Number one: the trust test. You see, whatever man trusts in, that's his god, isn't it? Now, if you're trusting in money, if you're trusting in uncertain riches, then money's your god. Now, do you find yourself constantly visualizing what you could do if you had enough money, or what money can do? You know, there are some things money can do, but there are a lot of things money cannot do. For example, Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 4 says that "*riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.*" (Proverbs 11:4) That is, when the Final Judgment comes, and the wrath of God descends, you're not going to be able to buy your way out. "*Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.*" When your soul stands before Almighty God, you're going to find out that if you put your trust in money, you put your trust in the wrong thing. Proverbs 11 and verse 28: "*He that trusteth in his riches shall fall.*" (Proverbs 11:28) Now, if money is your god—if that's where your trust is—you're going down: the trust test.

### **B. The Priority Test**

I'll tell you another test—and that's the priority test. What is first in your life? Well, let's just put it another way: What are your goals in life? Is your goal in life to have a lot of money? I didn't say it's wrong to have a lot of money. I said, is your goal in life to have a lot of money? The Bible says, "They that will be rich"—that is, their desire is to be rich—"are going to fall into a snare." (1 Timothy 6:9) Are you thinking about the house that you could buy, the car that you could buy? Are you thinking about your retirement? Are you thinking about how much that you could put away? What is it that consumes you? Are you consumed with that?

Or, on the other hand, are you concerned with the character of your children? Are you consumed with growing in Christ? Are you consumed with your prayer life? Are you consumed with world evangelization? Are you consumed with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? How many people do you know that would perhaps take a reduction in salary in order to have a better environment to raise their children and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ? What is the priority? Is your goal to have enough to impress other people, to satisfy your pride, to gain power? Then, money is your god. Matthew chapter 6, verse 33, says, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*" (Matthew 6:33)

### **C. The Surrender Test**

Do you think that if you had enough money you'd be secure? The trust test. The

priority test. Here's a big one to find out whether or not money is your god—very frankly, I had to face this one as I prepared this sermon: the surrender test. Is there anything you own—listen carefully now—is there anything you own—anything—that you would not gladly surrender to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ—anything you own that you would not gladly surrender in order to glorify the Lord Jesus? And I didn't say that you'd give it if some pastor asked for it. I didn't say that you would give it if somebody manipulates you, twists your arm. Now I'm not asking about that. I'm asking if you knew in your heart that God wanted it and you knew it would glorify the Lord—I don't care what it is—would you say, “Lord, it is thine; I am only a steward; all you've asked for is what is already yours”? If not, you're trusting mammon rather than Almighty God.

#### **D. The Admiration Test**

Let me ask you about another test: the admiration test. What things do you really admire? Who and what do you really admire? Had you rather be reading *Forbes* magazine, the *Wall Street Journal*, or *Fortune* magazine, or had you rather be reading God's Word? I'm not saying its wrong to read those other things. But I'm saying, where is your joy? What things do you admire? If you had a chance to be invited home for a meal with the rich and the powerful and the influential, or with the dedicated and sincere and godly, to which home would you rather go? Would you rather be invited home for a meal with a great saint of God, or with some wheeler-dealer? What really do you admire? What do you think is the most important thing in this life?

Now you are to be a good steward. You're to have a proper assessment of wealth. See it for what it is. Don't worship wealth. Put the Lord first. That doesn't mean that He doesn't want you to have things. We're going to talk about that.

## **II. A Proper Attainment of Wealth**

Now, number one, there must be a proper assessment. Don't make money your god. Number two, because there's a proper assessment of your wealth, there must be a proper attainment of your wealth. God is not only interested in how you see your money, but God is interested in how you get your money. Now, this parable teaches us that God encourages honest work. We're stewards. Verse 2 tells us that we are stewards, and so God is interested in the investment of money, the handling of money, the making of money. You see, stewardship—stewardship—is that area of life where men make money, and God makes men; where women make money, and God makes women. It's God's way of testing us and trying us and preparing us for things that are far more important.

You see, if you've not been faithful in the small things and in the monetary things,

who's going to give you the true riches? Look, if you will, in verses 10 through 13 of this passage: *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"* (Luke 16:10–12)

Now, what does that mean? This parable teaches us that the measure of how much God can trust you with spiritual power in things that really matter is how you deal with money. The measure of how much God can trust you with spiritual power and influence is how you do with money. What you do with your money is an index of what you will have in greater treasure. God is withholding blessings from some people in this congregation and some people who are listening to me through television, and some people who will listen to this tape—God is withholding blessings from you, and I'll tell you why: God gave you a test, and you failed the test. God gave you some possessions, they came from God, and God wanted to see what you were going to do with those possessions, and you were not faithful to God with those possessions. And therefore you've failed the test, and God could not give you what He really wanted to give you.

Look in verse 11: *"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"* Why should God commit greater things to your stewardship if you've not been faithful in the lesser things? If you can't take care of the mundane, and then material things, who is going to commit to you the spiritual things, the great things, the true riches? If you're not faithful in small things, who's going to give you big things?

Now, the Bible says, *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."* It doesn't say, "He could be." He is. It follows, as night follows day: Everything big is made up of something little. And if you take care of the little things, *ipso facto*, the big ones are there. It's impossible for you to be faithful in little things and not be faithful in big things. And so, everything big is made up of something little. And so, our Lord just tests us. He trusts us, gives us a test, to see if we can handle what He's given us.

Now, some of you may be very wealthy materially, very poor spiritually, because God has given you wealth to see what you would do with it, and you've failed the test, and you'll never, no never, no never know the true riches. Now I didn't say you can't have both. You can. Some of the godliest people you'll ever meet on the face of this earth are people who have learned to be good stewards of that which God has put into their hands. So God is interested in your stewardship. Stewardship is how men make and manage money.

Now, God takes pleasure when you prosper. Did you know that God wants you to prosper? Psalm 35, verse 27—this is a great verse; put it in your margin: *“Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.”* (Psalm 35:27) God wants to bless you with wealth. Now I’m not saying that everybody who wants to be is going to be wealthy. But God wants to bless you with wealth.

You can either be blessed or cursed with riches. Now, if you can handle it, God wants to take pleasure in the prosperity of His servant. Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 18: *“But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.”* (Deuteronomy 8:18) But listen to me, friend: If that is your consuming desire, if that is your goal in life, you are headed down, you are going to get yourself into serious trouble, for the Bible says, *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveteth after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”* (1 Timothy 6:10)

Don’t ever tell anybody that it’s all right to make all the money you can, just as long as you make it honestly. That’s a lie out of hell. If you’re making all the money you can, you’re going to be making money when you ought to be praying, or when you ought to be soul winning, or when you ought to be sleeping, or when you ought to be going fishing with the kids.

Now, God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. But don’t pay too high a price for the money that you get. Don’t make money, for example, at the expense of your health. Psalm 127 and verse 2—listen to it: *“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.”* (Psalm 127:2)

Now, friend, it’s one thing for you to possess wealth; it’s another thing for the wealth to possess you. Well, that’s what’s on your mind: you’re working late; you’re carrying that work home with you. You’ve got those spreadsheets out there. You’re going over this business day after day after day. You’re missing your day’s sleep. You’re burning the candle at both ends. But you’re not as bright as you think you are. He gives His beloved sleep. Don’t get your wealth at the expense of your health. A wise man said, many people spend the first half of their life wasting their health to get their wealth, spend the last half of their life spending their wealth to try to get their health back, and they’re unhappy at both ends of their lives.

And listen: Don’t make money in any matter that is contrary to the will of God. If you’re in any unfair trade practice, if you think of yourself as a shrewd wheeler-dealer, God will hold you accountable for that. Money made by gambling has the curse of God upon it. Gambling, technically, is a swindle. And gambling has the spirit of a thief. You’re trying to get what belongs to another person into your own hands without giving him

anything for it. You're paying for a chance to take from someone else. Stealing is taking from others. Under the law, gambling is a payment for a chance to take from other people. What's wrong with gambling? It is pleasure and profit at somebody else's pain and loss. All legitimate business is win-win. Gambling is win-lose. There cannot be winners without losers. It is completely, totally, antithetical to basic morality in the Bible or out of the Bible.

The liquor business: You have no business in the liquor business. That business is brewed with tears, thickened with blood, and flavored with death. And the Bible says in Habakkuk 2, verse 15, "*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken.*" (Habakkuk 2:15)

The pornography business has the curse of Almighty God upon it. Don't try to make money by these things.

You say, "Well, a man's got to live." No, a man's got to die, and he's got to face God. God is interested in the way that you make money. Now, if you're in an honorable profession, however, and you have a good job, a decent job, a fair job, whatever you do, do it with your might. (Ecclesiastes 9:10) Don't be afraid of hard work.

My father recently went to heaven, one of the hardest-working men that I've ever known. My dad did not leave me a legacy of money. That doesn't bother me one bit, because he left me a legacy of character. He taught me the importance of hard work. I never one time thought about the possibility that my daddy might run off and leave my mama. I never thought one time about the possibility that my daddy might steal or do anything dishonestly. He taught me about the legacy of hard work. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 11 and 12, "*And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12) Plain English: "Be honest; work hard: God will honor that."

Most people today don't know how to save money. The Bible teaches that we are to save money. We're to plan for the future. Listen to these verses—Proverbs chapter 6, verses 6 through 8: "*Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.*" (Proverbs 6:6–8) Now, the ant doesn't have to have somebody crack a whip over that ant to say, "Lay up for yourselves food for the wintertime, because the winter is coming." Proverbs 21, verse 20, says, "*There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.*" (Proverbs 21:20) One of our senior saints here at Bellevue Baptist Church told me that Dr. Lee told him, "If you only make twenty dollars a week, and you save a nickel of it, you're a success. But if you spend a nickel more than you make, you're a failure."

We're to save.

Now I'm not talking about hoarding money. You're not to hoard money. I was looking at this scripture this morning in the book of James where James says in James chapter 5, verse 1, *"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days."* (James 5:1-3) And the word *treasure* has the idea of a collection. It's the word we get our word *thesaurus* from, which is a collection of words. You just have a spirit of hoarding.

Now I'm talking about saving. I'm not talking about hoarding. What is the difference? Now, the Bible does not condemn you for having wealth. Some of the finest people in the Bible were wealthy people. Abraham was wealthy. David was wealthy. Joseph of Arimathea was wealthy. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, they were wealthy people. Barnabas was a wealthy man. And the Bible commends them. The Lord God gave them the power to get that wealth. But the Bible is against ruthless greed.

Now, listen. The Bible is in favor of saving. The Bible is against hoarding. Now, what is the difference between saving and hoarding? Hoarding is where you have more than you'll ever need, and for you, making money is a game: the person who wins the prize has the biggest ego. Some people are addicted to making money like some people are addicted to alcohol or drugs. You see, in hoarding, the person wants a surplus. In saving, the person wants to meet needs. In saving, you anticipate the future and future needs, and you prepare for it.

The Bible doesn't teach that you are to hoard. The Bible teaches that you are to save and to find out what your anticipated needs are to prepare for it. But God wants His money in circulation. One of these days you're going to die, and your epitaph may be "the richest fool in the cemetery," because you had something that you could have used for the glory of God; you could have made friends that would bring you into heavenly habitations; but you did not do it. Larry Burkett says that the average American is worth less at sixty-five than he was at twenty-five: he hasn't learned how to save. And, you see, we need to have a proper attainment of money.

### **III. A Proper Assignment of Money**

Now, here's the third thing: Not only do you need to have a proper assessment of money, and a proper attainment of money, but you need to have a proper assignment of money. God is interested in how you see money, how you get money, and how you use money. Do you know if I want to find out a lot about your character, I can just look at your bankbook and your cancelled checks? I'd find out a lot about you. Many

marriages—and some are listening to me—you're in trouble over money more than any other difficulty; you have not learned to manage your money. You say, "If I got a raise, that would take care of me." No, it wouldn't. Your problem is an attitude. To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough. And if you cannot be faithful in that which is least, you'll not be faithful in that which is much. And, as a matter of fact, some people, when they get a raise, or a bigger job, or promotion, it just opens the door to a wider indebtedness.

I want to say something to all the young people—young marrieds particularly; those of you who are single also: Stay out of debt. Stay out of debt. Get rid of those credit cards. I'm not opposed to having credit cards, per se, if you pay it at the end of the month. How many people do? Statistics show us that people who buy with credit cards spend more money than they would have if they had bought with cash, because it doesn't seem like you're spending money when you give that card. And many young people today are worshipping the false god of credit.

You say, "Pastor, I'm already in debt. How can I get out of debt? What can I do?" Friend, if you only knew how much that consumer credit is costing you. It's absolutely ridiculous. Well, let me just tell you very quickly. And I'm not a financial expert on these things. Don't come to me for investment advice. But I know this much, and I know I'm dead certain about these. Number one: Don't borrow any more money. You can't get out of debt by borrowing money anymore than you can put out a fire with gasoline. Number two: Designate everything possible to debt retirement except your necessities, and except your tithe to Almighty God. Never stop tithing in order to get out of debt, because you need God's help to get you out of debt. Number three: Sell those items that are costing you money, those depreciating items. You've got a big car you're making payments on, you've got a fifteen-thousand-dollar car: sell it, take the loss if you have to, and get a one-thousand-dollar car. It's transportation you need. Pay yourself rather than paying other people. Cut your own grass. Do your own cooking. Clean your own house. Learn to be frugal. Don't go out to eat. Don't buy new clothes. If you have to buy clothes, buy them at a bargain store somewhere. And go to those that you owe money to and tell them that you want to pay them, that you're going to get out of debt, and they'll work with you. Even the IRS will work with you. They had rather get something from you than have you in jail giving them nothing. I'm saying to you, get out of this kind of consumer debt. I'm not talking about owing on a house or investing in a business. Beware of impulse buying. Buy according to your need, not your greed. Build a budget. Do you know what a budget is? A budget is a system of telling your dollars where to go, instead of looking around and asking where they went. That's what I mean about have a budget. And get on this budget. Beware of ego buying. We're buying

things we don't need to impress people we don't like with money we don't have. You think you're going to play better golf because you've got an alligator pasted on your shirt up there. I mean, people have done a job on us. Do you know where you are financially? Do you even know? The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 27, verse 23, *"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds."* (Proverbs 27:23) Sit down and find out what you owe.

Now, be faithful to God. Invest your money in things that really count. Learn to tithe. Joyce and I have been married now for many, many years. As teenagers, we learned to tithe. When we got married, we made up our minds we would be faithful to tithe. And we've said we'll give not only a tithe, we will give more than the tithe. And we've done that all of our married life.

And, friend, I want to tell you that I know what it is to hardly have two nickels to rub together. I got married as a nineteen-year-old boy going to school. I stayed in school seven years after that, wanting my wife to stay home. We wanted to start our family. We started our family. My wife stayed home. I worked. But we tithed. And all of these years we've tithed. Now, a tithe is ten percent of your income. The Bible says in Malachi 3:10, *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."* (Malachi 3:10) And I give you that testimony that that's the kind of a God that we serve. You don't tithe because it pays; you tithe because it's right. When you have given a tithe, that doesn't mean the other nine-tenths is yours. All that you have belongs to God. The tithe is only an indication, only a representation, that, "Lord, here's the tenth. It is thine already, and the rest of it, Lord, is yours to use however you want."

But learn to tithe, and then learn to give over and above the tithe: *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."* (Malachi 3:8)

## **Conclusion**

We're going to be taking our annual Love Offering. You say, "You finally got to it, didn't you, pastor?" Yep, sure did: the annual Love Offering. But I want to tell you something, friend—and listen very carefully: If you think for one skinny New York minute that we here at this church are interested in what you have, and not interested in you, you're so wrong you could not be more wrong. Don't ever say, "All they want down there at that church is your money." That is a lie out of hell. I'm going to tell you something else: And the Love Offering we're going to take this year, nobody's going to put any pressure on you. If anybody does, you come tell me, and I'll tell Jesus on them. I'm going to tell you

something else: What you do not willingly give, God neither needs nor wants.

You say, “I don’t want to give anything.” Well, help yourself. You don’t mind if the rest of us do, do you? Folks, listen. God is a great God, and God has said, *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall man give into your bosom.”* (Luke 6:38) God wants to bless us. And again, what God says is this: “If you haven’t been faithful in that which is least, you won’t be faithful in that which is much. And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who is going to commit into your hands the true riches?” You can take it with you, if you’ll learn to be faithful.

But that brings another question—and I’m finished: Where are you going? Do you know that you know that you’re bound for that city? I mean, do you know it? Are you saved? I didn’t ask you if you’re a member of Bellevue. I didn’t ask if you’re baptized. I didn’t ask if you know the plan of salvation. I want to know that you know the man of salvation, the Lord Jesus. Have you repented of your sin? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? Are your sins forgiven? Do you believe in Christ as your Lord and Savior? Does He live in your heart? Does God’s Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you’re a child of God?

# Learning to Think Small

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 14, 1999

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 16:10–12

*“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”*

LUKE 16:10

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Small Things Make a Ministry of Fruitfulness
- II. Small Things Are a Measure of Faithfulness
- III. Small Things Are a Means of Forcefulness

Conclusion

## Introduction

Today, we’re putting an emphasis not upon big things, but upon small things. Today, we’re going to learn some big lessons from little things. Turn to Luke chapter 16, would you, please? Luke chapter 16—and in a few moments we’re going to begin reading in verse 10. But I hope that you will never despise something because it is small. Small things have big consequences.

¶ I heard about a woman who said to her husband, “I didn’t marry you for your looks; I married you for your brains. It’s the small things that count.”¶

Well, there are some small things that really are very potent and very powerful. The atom is very small, but men learned to divide and to split that small atom and release the greatest explosion ever felt on Planet Earth—incredible power in small things.

Luke chapter 16, beginning now in verse 10: *“He that is faithful in that which is least”—that which is small, that which is little—“is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon,”—that is, in materialistic things, in money and so forth—“who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?”* (Luke 16:10–12) Small things are very important.

¶ On October 31, 1983, Korean Air Lines set out from Alaska to fly to Seoul, Korea. And the engineer set the onboard computer, and he made a small error—a very small

error: one and a half degrees. When that airplane, Flight 007, set out, it flew, and nobody noticed that there was only a one-and-a-half-degree variance in the flight plan. A hundred miles away, as that airplane flew out over the Aleutians, it was not even noticeable. But it continued to fly at a course faulted by one and a half degrees and eventually wandered over Soviet land. And those Russian fighter pilots scrambled and shot Flight 007 out of the sky. All on board lost their lives. A very slight variance—just one and a half degrees. Your life may only be off right now one and a half degrees, and it may not even be noticeable. But where you end may be disastrous.†

There is an incredible power in small things. And we need to take cognizance of small things, and we need to set our directions well. Many things may not seem important. Sometimes time doesn't seem important. If you want to know the value of one year, ask a student who has failed his final exam. If you want to know the value of one month, ask a mother whose baby has come a month early. If you want to know the value of one week, ask an editor who has a weekly newspaper, or ask a pastor who preaches every week. If you want to know the value of just one hour, ask lovers who are waiting to meet and have that rendezvous. If you want to know the value of one minute, ask a person who's missed a bus, a train, or a plane by one minute. If you want to know the value of one second, ask a person who has narrowly survived a tragic accident. If you want to know the value of one millisecond, ask a person who was given the silver medal rather than the gold medal in the Olympics. Small things have big consequences.

†When I was a boy, we used to talk about a battle that was lost because the horse didn't have his shoe, and the rider couldn't ride the horse, and the battle was lost. And it went something like this: "For the want of a nail, the shoe was lost. For the want of a shoe, the horse was lost. For the want of a horse, the rider was lost. For the want of a rider, the battle was lost. For the want of the battle, the kingdom was lost. The kingdom was lost all for the want of a nail!" Just a small thing, but small things have big consequences.†

And what our Lord is telling us is, "Learn to think small." *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."* And I want to write three things upon your heart today as we learn some big thoughts about little things and learn how to think small.

## **I. Small Things Make a Ministry of Fruitfulness**

First of all, I want you to see that small things make a ministry of fruitfulness. Do you want to be fruitful in your life? You'll never be fruitful in your life unless you learn to be faithful in small things.

Now all of us are custodians, not necessarily of big things, but of small things. For example, when Moses was out there on the backside of the desert, having been

stripped of everything, God said to Moses, “Moses, what is that in your hand?” You know what Moses had in his hand? Just a rod! Just an old shepherd’s rod! And God said, “Moses, throw it on the ground.” (Exodus 4:2–3) He did. It became a serpent. Then He said, “Now, Moses, pick it up.” He said, “What’s that, Lord? My hearing is not what it used to be.” “Pick it up, Moses, and pick it up by the tail.” (Exodus 4:4) “Well, God, don’t you understand that leaves the business end loose?” “Pick it up by the tail.” And that rod became the rod of God, and it led Israel out of barrenness and out of bondage and into blessedness. It was a small thing, but in God’s hand it became not Moses’ rod; it became God’s rod.

I think of little David. I preached over in North Carolina about little David the day before yesterday. Little David, he had five smooth stones and a sling—and just a shepherd boy, a little boy. I mean, he wasn’t a man. He was a “*stripling*,” the Bible says (1 Samuel 17:56)—a teenage boy, ruddy, and of a fair countenance. That is, he had a little peach fuzz on his chin, hadn’t even started to shave yet. And that little boy with a sling killed a mighty giant. Billy Sunday said, “He hit him on the coco, and he went down for the count of ten.” God used little David.

I remember reading in the New Testament about a small boy. He had a little lunch. He had some fish and loaves—just five loaves and a few sardines—and with that he fed five thousand. God used little things in the Bible.

God used Mary. She had a little box of perfume, an alabaster box of perfume, and she broke that and anointed the feet of Jesus. And Jesus said, “Wherever the gospel is preached, it will be spoken of her.” (Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:9) Now that was two thousand years ago, and here we are in Memphis, Tennessee, mentioning that today. The whole world is filled with the perfume of that little alabaster box. God uses small things.

Jesus was watching when people put their gift in the treasury, and He said there was a widow who came—a little woman now—and she put in two mites. Scholars tell us that is less than one of today’s pennies—two mites. And in the Bible it says there were many rich people who came and gave their gifts. And thank God for that. The Bible doesn’t despise rich people giving. They can give. They ought to give. They do give. Bless God for that. But Jesus saw this little widow. She put in two mites. It was her whole living. Do you know what Jesus said? He said, “She gave more than all of them” (Luke 21:3; Mark 12:43)—not “more than any of them”; “more than all of them,” and not only “more than all that day.” But I’m telling you, millions and perhaps billions of dollars have been raised for the cause of Christ by the illustration, by the emphasis, by the motivation of that little lady. I mean, it was a small thing, but see how God used it.

You know, Jesus, when He was speaking, said, “You can’t even give a cup of cold water in the name of the disciple and lose your reward.” (Matthew 10:42; Mark 9:41) Do

you know while we're here, over there we have a nursery full of babies? I mean, they're over there right now. You don't see them. Every church ought to have a "bawl room." We have one. They're over there bawling—right over there. And we have faithful people over there who are wiping little noses, changing dirty diapers, and giving little drinks of water. Now you may not be aware of it, but I want you to know that heaven is aware of it. "You can't even give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple and lose your reward." Our God is a God who takes notice of little things. Not a sparrow falls but what He knows it. (Matthew 10:29) The very number of the hairs of your head are noticed by our God, our great and mighty God that we sang about—"What a Mighty God We Serve." (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7) And He's mighty enough to take notice of small things.

Now, friend, listen. Small things make a ministry of fruitfulness. Don't you get the idea that because you're not a big shot, God can't use you. As a matter of fact, God may not use you because you're a big shot. *There are some people too big for God to use. There is nobody too small for God to use.* I mean, you can be so full of yourself God can't use you. Now, listen. Don't compare yourself to other people. The great danger and the great problem is not that you cannot do what others can do; the great problem is that you will not do what you can do. As God asked Moses, "What is that in your hand?" (Exodus 4:2) A little widow had two mites. A little lad had a little lunch. Dorcas had a little needle, but with that she made coats and garments. And when she died, many people wept.

You know, Jesus never did anything big in the eyes of men. He never pastored a large church. He was never president. He was never governor. He was never mayor. He never built any great big buildings. He talked about little things. He talked about flowers. He talked about a lost coin, a lost son. He went about doing good. He was interested in small things. Nobody has affected the world or eternity like the Lord Jesus. You see, we all started small, every one of us, and the great people of the world started small.

† A man was in a village one time, and he asked somebody, an old-timer in that village, "Any great men born here?" He said, "No, just babies." †

You're not born great; you're born a baby. And when God wanted to take His children out of Egypt—I'm talking about His children; I mean the children of Israel: men, women, boys, and girls—there was a little baby born; his name was Moses—put Moses in a little ark, a little thing, a little boat made of bulrushes about the size of the top of this pulpit. It became a battleship to sink old Pharaoh's kingdom. God used small things.

When God wanted to redeem me, when He wanted to redeem you, how did He do it? A baby was born in Bethlehem, a little baby in a little town least among the villages of Judah. Little Bethlehem! A baby was born, and the Infinite became an infant. God just

delights to use small things.

When Zechariah and Zerubbabel were wanting to rebuild the temple, they came back from captivity and they were trying to rebuild the temple. And the temple didn't seem like it was going to have the glory of the former days. And the people's morale was low, and their resources were low, and the crowds were small. In Zechariah chapter 4, verse 10, the prophet said, "*Who hath despised the day of small things?*" (Zechariah 4:10)

Listen. Don't despise small things. Learn to think small. You and I don't have to be carried away with bigness and noise and numbers. It doesn't necessarily mean that God is in something just because it's big. It doesn't mean that God is in Bellevue Baptist Church because Bellevue Baptist Church is a big church. Barnum and Bailey got a crowd with the circus. We're going to say more about that later on, but don't equate greatness and goodness with bigness and numbers and size. You'll make a big mistake.

Elijah had been running from the enemy, and he was in despair because he saw how many the enemy had. Evidently, had been taking a poll, and he saw that he was in the minority; he was on the wrong side. He was in the minority, as many of us are feeling today. Put this verse down in your margin—1 Kings chapter 19, verses 11 and 12. Elijah was up in the mountains, and he said, "*Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains,*"—you can just hear a tornado. They say it's like a freight train when you hear one. It's splitting the rocks—"*and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake,*"—one of those terrifying things that a person can be in. Can you think of the power that can shake Mother Earth?—"but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire;"—now it doesn't say exactly what kind of a fire it was, but if you're talking about a tornado and an earthquake, it must have been some kind of fire, roaring and burning—"but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." (1 Kings 19:11–12)

Now, folks, if you're not careful, you'll get your eyes upon the tornados and the earthquakes and the holocausts and miss hearing the still small voice. Isn't that true? Our God is a God of little things. We need to learn that there's fruitfulness in little things. If you will be cognizant of little things, you're going to have a very fruitful ministry.

## **II. Small Things Are a Measure of Faithfulness**

Now, here's the second thing I want you to notice: Small things are also a measure of faithfulness. Now they are a means of fruitfulness, but they are a measure of faithfulness. When God gets ready to measure me, He gets ready to measure you;

when He gets ready to test you, to try you, what is He going to look at: the big things you've accomplished? No. Luke 16:10—go back to our verse again: *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.”* He doesn't say he might be faithful in much. He doesn't say if you're faithful in the small things, then you might be faithful in the big things. No, if you're faithful in the small things, you cannot fail but be faithful in the big things. Why? Because everything big is made up of something small. You take care of the small things; the big things take care of themselves. You are faithful, beyond the shadow of any doubt, in that which is much—*“and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”* (Luke 16:10) If you steal five dollars, you're a thief as much as if you stole five million dollars. If you're unfaithful in that which is least, you're unfaithful also in that which is much. Remember, everything big is made of something little.

*Little drops of water,  
Little grains of sand,  
Make the mighty ocean,  
And the pleasant land.*

JULIA ABIGAIL FLETCHER CARNEY

Little drops of water make the ocean. Little grains of sand make the beach.

† I used to pastor down at the Space Center, where the Saturn V missiles were fired and now where the great spaceships go up—the space shuttles. All of us remember that day when the Explorer blew up—a devastating, heartbreaking thing; a gut-wrenching thing to know that those noble people aboard that thing died. Do you know why it failed? One of the smallest pieces, a little thing they called an O-ring, a small thing failed.†

Do you know what is God saying? *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.”* God is saying, “If you can't be trusted with the small things, I can't trust you with the big things.” There are people in this congregation who have been passed over by God. God would want to bless you, but He can't bless you. God would want to use you, but He can't use you. Do you know why? You're not faithful in the small things. You're the kind of person who thinks you can park in an illegal parking place. You're the kind of person that thinks that the speed limit was made for somebody else. You're the kind of a person who thinks that it's all right to take the book out of the library without checking it out. You say, “Those are just little small things.” Oh, yeah, sure. You're not faithful in small things, and God says you're not trustworthy.

You see, He said, “If I've tested you with money...” He said, “If you're not faithful with the unrighteous mammon...” (Luke 16:11) You know that money that you think is so important? Do you know what God is saying? “That's a little thing. You think it's a big thing? That's a little thing.” God said, “That's a little thing.” If God can't trust you with

money, do you think He's going to give you the true riches? Many have been tested with money, and you've failed the test. That is a small thing. You can't trust God with a dime out of a dollar. How are you going to trust Him when something big comes along? No! If you've been unfaithful in that which is least, you're going to be unfaithful in that which is much. I'm telling you, friend, when God measures me, He's not measuring me by the big things; He's measuring me by the small things. Therefore I should never be tempted to do less than my best.

Somebody asked me yesterday, "How is it when you preach to all those thousands of people? How do you preach to that many people?" I said, "Just like you would preach to a handful." And I wasn't thinking about this message when I said that, but that's what I said. It just came to my mind just then. But that's what I said. And that's true. Sometimes people come to me, Brother Bob, and say, "I'm bringing my aunt. I'm bringing my uncle. Preacher, preach a good sermon." Good or bad, I preach the best I know how every time I preach—every time. Small crowd, big crowd—it doesn't make any difference. You do your best whenever you can. And if you're faithful in that which is least, you'll be faithful also in that which is much.

¶ When I was in college there were some of the boys who wanted to preach, but no church would have them preach. I went out on the street corners and preached. I was preaching on Daytona Beach, the street corners of Daytona Beach, and I stood on a bus bench and preached. And I saw a nice-looking man standing behind me in a suit, and I got down off the bench and went over and asked him, "Sir, may I have a moment of your time?" "Yes, son, you can." "Sir, are you a Christian?" He said, "Yes, son, I am." He was standing in front of a hotel. He said, "I own this hotel." I said, "Fine." And he said, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm Adrian Rogers." He said, "I'm Doyle Carlton." He said, "I'd like to get to know you, son." And he did get to know me. Later on, he was influential in my coming to his church to be the pastor of First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Florida, from which church I came to Bellevue. That was a small thing just on a street corner preaching and speaking to a man—a small thing.¶

Some people say, "Well, I'm not going to preach unless I'm at this church or that church." No. It bothers me when I hear seminarians say, "Well, I don't have a place to preach." You've got the world! You can preach anywhere. You don't have to have some formal invitation. And if you're not faithful in that which is least, you're not going to be faithful in that which is much. No. Listen, friend. When God comes to test us, He's going to test us not in the big things, but in the small things.

¶ Michelangelo, the great sculptor, had been working on a piece of art, a sculpture. Some friends came by to see what he was doing. It was a beautiful statue that he was working on, a piece of sculpture. They came back a month later, and it didn't seem like

he had done a thing. They said, “What have you done since the last time we were here?” He said, “Well, I’ve smoothed out a line here or there.” He said, “I’ve taken a few flakes of marble off his forehead. I have polished the arm some.” And they said, “That’s a month? All you’ve been doing is doing trifles.” And here’s what Michelangelo said to them: “True, they are but trifles. But trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle.”

### III. Small Things Are a Means of Forcefulness

Now, here’s the third and final thing I want you to notice this morning. We’re just talking about small things. And we talked about fruitfulness, and we talked about faithfulness; now I want us to think about forcefulness. Small things are a means of forcefulness. You see, our quartet sang this morning “Mountain, Get Out of My Way.” What is it that moved a mountain? Not a big thing, not an a-bomb; a small thing, a mustard seed—faith like a mustard seed. Matthew 17, verse 20—look it up. You see, small things have incredible force for good or for bad.

I heard a man say one time, Brother Bob, that he was twenty pounds overweight by choice. I thought, “Now that’s strange.” I’ve heard a lot of people talk about being overweight. I’ve never talked about a man being overweight by choice. He said, “I was twenty pounds overweight by choice.” He said, “Do you know why?” He said, “Nobody ever forced me to put one spoonful of food in my mouth. It was my choice.” Now, how do you get overweight? I mean, do you eat breakfast and gain twenty pounds? Don’t answer that. Maybe you think you do. But you don’t. How do you get overweight? Or let me rephrase that: How do we get overweight? How? One spoonful at a time, one mouthful at a time. And every spoonful we put in our mouths, we put in of our own free will. Is that right? I mean, you can’t put twenty pounds of food in your mouth at one time.

It is a power—the force of little things that have that cumulative effect that make the big things for good or for evil. I’m telling you that small things are a mighty, mighty force. When you are faithful in small things, you become very forceful and very fruitful.

David. Let’s go back to David. David was faithful in the small things; therefore he was forceful in the big things. David, when he went up against Goliath of Gath, that monstrous giant—Goliath was so tall. He was over nine feet tall. I couldn’t even scratch the top of his head standing on my tiptoes. Saul said, “Look, you’re not able. You’re not able to kill this giant.” David said, “You had better think again, mister.” He said, “I was keeping my sheep, and a lion came; and I took him by the beard and killed him. And a bear came, and I killed him. And I’ll fix this uncircumcised Philistine’s wagon the same way.” He had been faithful in the small things. And because of that, he had incredible force. He had been faithful to take care of a few sheep, and God gave him a nation to

be the shepherd over.

Elisha. I mentioned Elijah a few moments ago; Elisha just followed after Elijah. He became Elijah's servant. Elijah became his mentor. He filled a small spot, and he became Elijah's successor, and he did twice the miracles that Elijah did. He was faithful in the small things. He washed Elijah's hands. He was a servant. He was like a valet to the man of God. You see, there is power in these small things.

Timothy was Paul's understudy. He later became Paul's successor. Now, let me say something. We're talking about the forcefulness of small things. Do you think when I say to think small, that you need to be occupied with no ambition, content to fill a small place? Content, yes. But you listen to me. It is a sin for you to be content with small things when you could do bigger things and better things. Now, let's just shift gears here a little bit. You see, it's a sin to do small things when you could and should do bigger things. Don't despise the day of small things. (Zechariah 4:10)

Bellevue is a wonderful church. I love this church. And, you know, I'm so grateful for it. It's not because I'm the pastor. It was when I got here. But now, listen to me. Bellevue Baptist Church began in 1903 with a handful of people—1903, a little handful of people, those folks looking down from heaven right now. And they understand, you know, what the Bible says when it says, "Despise not the day of small things." That didn't mean that they started with a little handful of people so they decided that they wanted to stay small. I spoke to our New Members Breakfast this morning over across the street, and I said, "People want to know how big will Bellevue be when it's big enough." I said, "Bellevue Baptist Church will be big enough when all five and a half billion people on the face of the earth are saved." Man, if we reach this world for Jesus Christ, we're going to have to have a lot of Bellevues. There's nothing wrong with a small church. I pastored a small church. If we had as many as we have in the choir, it would have been like Easter Sunday. We wouldn't have had that many. It was glorious! There's nothing wrong with a small church. Thank God for small churches. But, friend, there's something wrong with a church that's not growing when it's in a neighborhood of lost people. I mean, it's a sin for you to be satisfied with small things when you could be doing great and mighty things for God.

You think about the early church, how that early church grew. Jesus started with twelve. The twelve became 120 in Acts chapter 1 and verse 15. (Acts 1:15) And then on the Day of Pentecost there were three thousand added to them. We've got 3,120, and then in Acts 2, verse 47, the Bible says, "*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" (Acts 2:47) And then in Acts chapter 4 and verse 4 we read about five thousand people who were saved in one service. (Acts 4:4) That was just the men. Then you add the women and children. That would make about twenty thousand—a wife and two kids each family. There's twenty thousand plus the 5,120 that are already

there. Then there are twenty-five thousand people there in just a few days. And then in Acts chapter 5 the Bible says they *“filled Jerusalem with [their] doctrine.”* (Acts 5:28) And then in Acts chapter 6, the Bible says in verse 7, *“The number of the disciples multiplied.”* (Acts 6:7) No more addition; now it’s multiplication.

Bellevue Baptist Church ought to continue to grow, and every church ought to continue to grow. Say *amen*. People sit around, you know, saying, “Well, I just don’t like what’s happening to our little old church. It’s getting so big. I don’t feel comfortable any more.” God have mercy upon your pitiful soul. God have mercy upon you. Don’t you have a burden for those that are lost? God in His Word talks about the church growing. The early church was explosive in growth, and I’ll tell you how they did it: they were interested in small things. They were faithful in the small things. They took care of the little things. Let me tell you what Jesus said. We’re talking now about fruitfulness, faithfulness, and forcefulness. Jesus said in John chapter 15, verse 2, *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”* (John 15:2) Now, put this verse down—John 15, verse 8: *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”* (John 15:8) Do you think God is glorified by your piddling around? He speaks of fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”* We ought to learn the principle of multiplication.

‡ Question: If I offered you today one million dollars, or I said I’m going to give you a penny, and I will guarantee you—ironclad guarantee—that I will double that every day for a month, which would you take? Be careful. A million dollars right now cold cash, or one penny that will be doubled every day for thirty days? Take a penny and double it every day for thirty days, you have twenty-five million dollars. If you don’t believe it, take your calculator and go home and figure it out. Just double it every day. You see, what is that? That things begin to grow exponentially.‡

Just suppose that there were one Christian in Memphis—just one Christian—and that one Christian won one soul a year. Let’s not talk about doubling it a day, but let’s say double a year, and teaches his convert to win one a year. In thirty years, it would be twenty-five million Christians. Think about it. I’ve been here twenty-five years, twenty-six years. I mean, that’s incredible! Small things make big things. Small things are a matter of forcefulness. There’s power. “Mountain, get out of my way”—that’s what a mustard seed is saying. “Mountain, get out of my way.” Oh, we need to learn how to think small.

## Conclusion

You know, one of the former pastors of this church, Dr. Robert G. Lee, he was a great man, a great mind. He used to preach a sermon called “Chasing Fleas.” The text was about David talking to Saul. David was calling himself a flea. Saul was out there hunting

for David, and David said in 1 Samuel 24, verse 14, *“After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.”* (1 Samuel 24:14) David was saying, “Look, Saul, you’re a king. Why are you chasing me? I’m just a flea.” And then here’s what Dr. Lee said: “A king who had a crown, a scepter, and a throne; a king who had an army at his command—doing what? Chasing a flea. Wasting great energies on cheap trivialities, despising great opportunities, dishonoring himself with cheap littleness. A king shooting a canon at sparrows, charging anthills with drawn swords, fishing for minnows with an anchor hook.” And then Dr. Lee warned about becoming slaves to small anxieties, small ideas, and small ambitions.

So, don’t get warped when I’m talking about thinking small. Don’t think that I am saying that you ought to be satisfied with less than God wants for you. Friend, I’m just saying that smallness is a means of forcefulness. It is the root of much fruit. And Jesus said, *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”* (John 15:8)

‡ Recently down in Southern California there was a group of whales that ran aground; ten whales on the beach at San Diego, and they just ran aground. The people came out there and they were trying to move these whales back into the sea, and they couldn’t get them back in, and they all died. And they asked people, “How did these whales get beached, these great monsters?” They were chasing minnows. And they chased minnows in the shallows, and then the waves went out, and there they were.

‡ And the San Diego newspaper had this headline: *“Giants Perish Chasing Minnows.”*‡

When I’m talking to you about small things, I am not talking to you about trivialities, inanities, small things. I am saying, let your goal be as big as this world, but remember that our God is the God of small things. You be faithful in that which is least. Mister, you be faithful to your wife, to your children, to your business. Son, be faithful doing your homework. Be faithful in those small things. What is integrity? It is faithfulness in the small things. And when God comes to test me, and when God comes to test you, He’s going to test us not primarily on the big things, but the small things. But it’s a sin to only do small things when we could and should do big things.

What is in your hand? Don’t you compare yourself to somebody else. I’m telling you that no place is small if it’s in God’s will. Some of the greatest preachers in the world are in little crossroad country churches, overworked and underpaid and unknown. But if they are in God’s will, that’s the highest place on earth. Some people put money in the plate this morning. You say, “It may not be much.” Friend, you let God decide that. God said that little widow gave more than they all. (Luke 21:3; Mark 12:43) And remember this: You may in your own eyes be too big for God to use, but you’ll never be too small. Let’s learn to think small. Let’s learn to be faithful in the small things.‡

# Five Minutes After Death

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 2, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 16:19–31**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Contrast in Life

II. The Contrast in Death

III. The Contrast in Eternity

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and find Luke 16. We're going to talk about an unpleasant subject today, at least unpleasant for some, and that is the subject of death.

Death is a very real subject. Man is the only creature who knows that he's going to die, and he's trying desperately to forget it. You mention death to some people, they will change the subject. In some circumstances, they will change the subject like people change the channels with their remote control. They don't want to talk about death. They don't want to face death. But reason tells us we're going to die, experience tells us we're going to die, and if you're not prepared to die, you're not prepared to live. No man is ever ready for life until he is no longer afraid of death.

Now we human beings are kind of humorous. We're interested in the origin of the species. Well, friend, we ought to be more interested in the destiny of the species. I mean, from whence we've come, that's settled, but where we're going, that's not yet settled. There was a time when you were not. There never will be a time when you will not be. And so you need to consider today your eternal destiny.

The title of our message today is "Five Minutes After Death." The most amazing time you will ever spend will be the five minutes after you die.

"Loved ones will weep o'er my silent face,  
and dear ones will clasp me in sad embrace.  
Shadows and darkness will fill the place,  
five minutes after I die.  
Faces that sorrow, I will not see,  
voices that murmur will not reach me.  
But where, o, where will my spirit be,

five minutes after I die?  
Naught to repair the good that I lack,  
fixed to the goal of my chosen track.  
No time to repent, no turning back,  
five minutes after I die.  
Mated forever with my chosen throng,  
long is eternity, o, so long.  
Then woe is me, if my soul be wrong,  
five minutes after I die.”

Jesus is the master teacher. Jesus told a story. And this story that I'm going to read to you from the Word of God deals with the three great, great, great issues that all of us must face. Those three issues are these: Life, Death, and Eternity. Everything else is a subset of those. Life, Death, and Eternity. Now, I direct your attention now to verse 19, this story that Jesus told that deals with these great issues.

Jesus says, “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abram's bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abram afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abram, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abram said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou are tormented. Beside all this, between us and you thee is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from thence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house. For I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they come into this place of torment. Abram saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them, And he said, Nay, father Abram; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, through one rose from the dead.”

Now, what we have here is the story by the master teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ. Some people say that this story is a parable. I doubt that it is a parable. Jesus does not call it a parable. Luke does not call it a parable. If this is a parable, it is the only parable that Jesus ever gave where He mentions someone's name. He mentions the name of a

man, Lazarus, and deals with him as though he is an actual individual. But whether it is a parable or not, the truth is there in parabolic form or in historical form. It is a truth that fell from the lips of the greatest teacher than ever lived. His name is Jesus. And when we look at this story, it's a story of contrasts. He's contrasting two men. He's contrasting their life. He's contrasting their death. And He is contrasting their destiny.

## **I. The Contrast in Life**

Now, I want you to see, first of all, the Contrast in Life. Beginning in verse 9, you're going to find out that these men are very different. One was a rich man; one was a poor man. One had more, materially than heart could wish; the other had not even enough to subsist. And have you noticed that life seems to be so full of inequities? I mean, they're congenital inequities. We seem to be born with inequities. Why is it? Why is it that some are born with such bodies and others are born with frail bodies? Why is it that some are born exceedingly handsome and others are born, the other way? Why is it that some have great intellects? They're born with gray matter and others don't. We say that, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal." But that is equal before the law, but they are not equal in their gifts and their abilities. Some have more native giftedness and, perhaps, this rich man was born, with a fine mind that enabled him to make his money. Perhaps the beggar was not that way.

But not only are there congenital inequities in life, there are material inequities. An, There are the haves and the have-nots. And many of us have things, not because of our ingenuity, not because of our wit and wisdom. We weren't born into wealth, but at least we were born into a free country. We were born into a place—you're dressed nicely and you probably came here in some fairly good automobile. Had you been born in certain countries of the world, I don't care how hard you worked, you wouldn't be dressed the way you're dressed today. You wouldn't have the breakfast that you had this morning. You just happened to be born in a free country, in a land of opportunity. And, that, in some ways, seems to be an inequity.

Here was this man who had so much. Every day for him, the rich man, was a feast. He fared sumptuously every day. He had his gourmet food. There's another man, just outside his gate, who is covered with sores, and flies, doubtless, on those sores, and dogs who are licking those sores.

Now, riches are not wrong in themselves. And poverty is not a blessing. Don't get the idea that poverty is a blessing and riches is a curse. If you can, if you can have wealth, that's fine. If poverty is a blessing then it's our job to divest ourselves of everything we own and go about trying to make everybody else poor. Think about it. No. Our Lord teaches that we're to have mercy upon the poor and to help get them out of

their poverty, not into their poverty. Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man. Abram was rich. King David was rich. And, however, the Bible says, “If riches increase, set not thine heart upon them.”

Now, not only were there these congenital inequities and, and these material inequities that we see in this story, but, but also there was a social inequity. Here is this man behind his gates. He is there in his palace. He is there with his servants. Outside is this beggar and, doubtless, the rich man was praised and petted and, lauded and, everybody wanted to find out about him. They were so interested to know about the lifestyle of the rich and the famous. Few people were interested in this beggar. I can imagine that the servant of the rich man said to the rich man, “You know, I’ve got these scraps here after the banquet today. There’s an old beggar out there at the gate. How about let’s take him some of the leftovers and give them to him?” I can just hear the rich man, saying, “No, don’t do that. I wish he’d go away. It’s disgusting that I have to go past him every time I come in and go out. The problem with that man is he has no ambition. He’s too lazy to work. There’s something definitely wrong with him. He probably deserves what he is getting.” Be very careful you don’t talk about poor people that way. It’s so easy to speak that way about the poor. And you need to say, “But for the grace of God, there go I.”

## **II. The Contrast in Death**

But we see a contrast in life. There are these inequities in life. The rich man and the poor man. But now, Jesus goes on, and not only does He speak about a contrast in life, but He speaks about a Contrast in Death. Look in verse 22. And the Bible says, “And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abram’s bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried.” Now, both the rich and the poor die. And I can say to you today, you are going to die. No matter how you try to escape death, you’re going to die. The only thing that will keep you from dying will be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And when He comes, you may die, as you go up to heaven, die to the old way and come to the new way, but we are going to die.

Peter Marshall, told a story many years ago and I can never get it out of my mind. It’s a fable about a rich merchant in Baghdad who had a servant. And the servant came to the merchant and said to him, “Sir, I need help.” The merchant said to his servant, “What help do you need?” He said, “Sir,” he said, “I was in the marketplace today and a sinister figure jostled me. And I turned and looked him in the face, and it was death. Death stared me in the face. Master, would you give me a horse. I need to flee to Samara because I saw the face of death today, and I need to flee from death.” The rich merchant of Baghdad said, “Take my finest horse and go.” Then the merchant himself

went down to the marketplace and he saw a hooded figure, and he tapped him on the shoulder. The figure turned around and the merchant said, "Are you death?" And death said, "Yes, I am death." He said, "Death, I want to ask you a question. Why did you frighten my servant today? Why did you do that to my servant?" Death said, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to frighten him. I was surprised to see him here. I have an appointment with him tomorrow in Samara." We will never really escape death. Sooner or later we are all going to die.

Now, the beggar died. And I'm sure when the beggar died, they hauled him off and, relatively sure that is, and the rich man said, "Good riddance." And the doctor, excuse me, the rich man died, and doubtless there was a difference when the rich man died. He felt a little pain somewhere. He went to the doctor and he said, "Doctor, I need a checkup." The doctor went through all of the tests and, and the doctor said, "We may have a problem here." The rich man said, "Well, money's no object. Bring in the others to consult." And they consult and then they do whatever is necessary to prolong his life, but he gets sicker and sicker. They have the best drugs, the best treatment, they have everything. And while he's convalescing, hopefully, the flowers come in, the cards come in, but he dies also.

I often read the obituaries and I read where the richest in the city die. I read where medical doctors themselves die. One day the banker will write his last check. One day the physician will write his last prescription. One day the pastor will preach his last sermon. We all die. And we don't know when we're going to die.

I serve on the Board of Focus on the Family. Dr. James Dobson is one of the greatest Christian men that I know anywhere and I love him like a brother. But Dr. James Dobson is a basketball player also. He was playing basketball, just a fun game, with one of the greatest basketball players who ever got on a court, Pistol Pete Maravich. Pistol Pete could do incredible things with a basketball if you ever saw him play. And James Dobson and Pistol Pete were out there laughing and joking and having a wonderful time. Dobson said to Pete, "Pete, how are you feeling?" He said, "Jim, I never felt better in my life," and fell on his face. Jim thought he was playing a game, but he fell on his face and died. "Never felt better in my life." In the midst of a game. You have an idea that you're going to go on and on and on and that you're, you're not going to die.

I was holding a funeral. I stood there and talked to a prominent businessman and the undertaker. The three of us stood there and we were talking about death. We were talking about the fact that none of us know when we're going to die, and we all three were philosophical, talking about death, the undertaker, the businessman, and the pastor. In a matter of days, both the undertaker and the businessman were dead. I

never got that out of my mind. We were standing there talking about death, and they were talking about the fact that nobody knows when he's going to die. Neither of those men had any idea that in just a matter of days they, too, would be dead. And what you're thinking right now is, "Tell them, preacher. Tell them." Isn't that right? You don't know. The Bible says there is but a step between me and death.

When I was in seminary, I used to go back and forth from the Gulf Coast of, of Mississippi where I pastored a little church, to New Orleans where I was going to school, back and forth. I rode, commuted with a young man whose name was Bob. Bob was a tall, sun-crowned preacher, one of the most gifted soul winners I've ever met, a handsome man with a big grin who loved Jesus passionately. Bob said to me, "Adrian, there's an old man who lives on your church field. His name is Mr. Buschwa." He said, "He has had a serious heart attack, a number of them, and he's going to die. He only has days to live. Adrian, he doesn't know how to be saved. Would you go by and tell Mr. Buschwa how to be saved?" I said, "Yes, Bob, I will." I went and I knocked on the door. That kindly old man came to the door. I said, "Mr. Buschwa." He said, "Yes." I said, "I'm Adrian Rogers. I'm a Baptist preacher. May I come in for a few moments? I want to talk to you about Jesus and tell you how you can know that you're saved and going to heaven when you die." He said, "Come in." I sat down and explained the marvelous, wonderful way that a man can be saved—by putting his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that old man prayed with me, gave his heart to Jesus, and was saved, I believe, and I thank God for that. But that's not the end of the story.

Just a few days after that, my friend, Bob, a young man in his 20's, had lunch with his wife, wiped his mouth, put his napkin down on the plate, took a few steps across the living room, gave a gasp, and fell down dead. Now, he had said to me, "Adrian, there's an old man on your church field who only has a few days to live." That old man lived for years. It was Bob who only had a few days to live. And you're thinking, "Well, I'm, I'm in good health right now." I don't know. You don't know what accident you may have on the way home. I'm telling you, folks, if you're not ready to die, you're not ready to live. And if you've not settled the fact that you're going to die, pardon me, but you're foolish, you're foolish.

Now, when the beggar died, the Bible doesn't even say he was buried. It says the rich man was buried. Do you know what they did with beggars and people of that day? It's horrible, but they would haul them off and throw them in the garbage heap to burn and, and just to be consumed. And, they wouldn't even have, many times, a burial. Nobody wanted to bury them. Sometimes the dogs would eat them. But the rich man was buried. And if it had been today, it would have been a silk-lined casket. If it would have been today, there would have been a number of fine priced automobiles out in

front of the synagogue or the church or wherever it was. There would have been a profusion of flowers from one side to the other, a jungle, a riot of color. The air would be filled with perfume. Doubtless, one of the greatest speakers would be there to eulogize the man. And one by one the people would, as they would dab their eyes, they would say, “He was a good man. He was a good man. Our community will miss him.” Not understanding, the Bible says, “There is none good, no, not one.” And all of their words would not change his destiny. And all of the finery would not change his destiny, for his soul was in hell before the undertaker knew he was dead.

### **III. The Contrast in Eternity**

Now, there was a Contrast in Life and a Contrast in Death, but I want to get to the major thing. There’s a Contrast in Eternity. Look, if you will, again in verse 22 of this chapter. Verse 22 says, “...the rich man died and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abram afar of, and Lazarus in his bosom.” A contrast in eternity.

Now, Jesus does what no one else can do. What Jesus does here is to pull back the curtain and let us look to the other side. Now, really, people, the only thing we know about life after death is what the Bible reveals and what Jesus says. Now, one thing that we know is that death is not extinction. Death is not annihilation. There is life after death. How do you know, Adrian? Because Jesus teaches it—because Jesus teaches it. You, your soul will be in existence somewhere when the sun, the moon, and the stars have turned to cinders. Your soul will be in existence somewhere. Somebody said that there is a tombstone and engraven on that tombstone are these words: “Pause, stranger, as you pass me by. As you are, now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. Prepare to die and follow me.” And someone wrote on that tombstone underneath it, I am told: “To follow you, I am not content, until I know which way you went.”

We’re going to die—we’re going to die. And in verse 22 you see a contrast. First of all, you see what we call the glories of heaven. The beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abram’s bosom. When he died, there was an angel convoy that came and took him away to a place called Abram’s bosom. What does that mean, Abram’s bosom? That’s strange. Well, Abram was the Father of the Faithful, the most revered of the Jewish leaders, the brightest star in the heavenly kingdom for these Jews. To be with Abram would be a place of incredible honor. Now, what does it mean to be in Abram’s bosom? Well, when people had a banquet in that day, they would not sit around a table as we sit around the table. They would recline. And, the best place would be where you would recline, where your head would be near the chest, the bosom, of the host. What he was saying is here, this man, who had been feeding on crumbs, is

now at a banquet. And, not only is he at a banquet, he is in a banquet at the very highest place of honor. What Jesus is showing is the great radical change that took place, this man as he's carried by the angels to heaven.

Now, if you're not saved, let me tell you something. I'm not trying to talk you into something grotesque, evil, vile, or bad. I'm not inviting you to a funeral; I'm inviting you to a feast. That's what our Lord is talking about. He's talking here about the epitome of glory when He said this man is carried by the angels into Abram's bosom.

Now, I would like to spend a lot of time today talking about heaven, but I'm afraid we speak too much about heaven and not enough about hell, so I'm going to spend just a little time here talking about the beggar in Abram's bosom.

What is heaven? Let me just put it in several sentences. Heaven is all that the all-benevolent loving heart of God would desire for you. Heaven is all that the omniscient mind of God could design for you. Heaven is all that the omnipotent hand of God could prepare for you. Heaven will be just right.

When I was a little boy, I used to think, well, you know, maybe I don't want to go to heaven, at least not right now, because I worried would they have any swimming in heaven? Would you be able to fish in heaven? Could you play baseball in heaven? Have you ever thought about that? When you're a child, especially, and think heaven is sort of the next best place, but it'd be a little better to stay here. Don't be so foolish.

Billy Graham was on Johnny Carson Show one time and I always think, O God, give him wisdom. Lord God, help him, as he's talking to Johnny Carson. Johnny Carson said to him, "Billy, if I go to heaven, will there be golf in heaven?" And Billy said, "Johnny, if you get to heaven, and golf is necessary for your joy, there will be golf in heaven." That was a great answer—a great answer. Now, don't anybody go around saying there's going to be golf in heaven. I'm not saying that. I am saying, dear friend, that you will not have a longing, a desire that heaven will not fulfill more than you can imagine. And I wish I had more time to talk about the glories of heaven.

But I want to talk to you a little bit about the agonies of hell as we talk about, five minutes after death. And my task, when I talk to you about hell, is not an easy one. Hell is the butt of jokes, the idea of ridicule. About the only time you see anything about hell today is in, in the comic pages today. A preacher who preaches on hell is looked upon as either ignorant or cruel or both. You say, "Well, Adrian, you're not going to preach on hell today, are you? I thought you were educated. Haven't you been to school?" I've been accused of that. "Yes, I've been to school," but I believe in hell.

You know, let me tell you why I believe in hell, and let me tell you, before I tell you why I believe in hell, the Bible, the devil is behind the teaching that there is no hell. Because the devil knows if men don't understand the teaching of hell, they'll not prepare

to go to heaven, they'll not give their heart to Christ. It makes no difference to me if all the scholars and all of the preachers and all of the scientists and all of the artists and all of the statesmen and all of the politicians and the liberal theologians put together said there is no hell. It would not change one iota, one ounce, of what the Word of God says.

I'm preaching to you from the Word of God. First Peter chapter 1, verse 26, says: "The word of the Lord endures forever..." And the scoffers do not put the fires of hell out. Men laughed at Noah when he spoke of the flood, but the Bible says in Genesis, chapter 7, verse 22: "And all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in dry land, died." Men scoffed at Lot when Lot warned that God was going to destroy fire and brimstone, destroy Sodom with fire and brimstone, but Genesis 19, verses 24 and 25: "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." Men scoffed at Daniel when Daniel said that Belshazzar was going to be slain, that the kingdom was going to be overthrown. And Daniel 5, verse 30 says, however, "In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain." Don't mock at the Word of God. Don't laugh at the Word of God. Listen to the Word of God.

Let me tell you why I believe in hell. Number one, because Jesus teaches it. Now, if you ever ridicule a preacher for being a hell-fire preacher, you are ridiculing the Lord Jesus Christ. There are at least 162 texts in the New Testament that speak of hell and the judgment of the lost. Over 70 of these were issued by Jesus Christ Himself. I believe in hell because I believe in Jesus.

Let me give you some words from Jesus. Put these in your margin. Matthew chapter 5, verses 29 and following—Jesus said, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Jesus is not saying that you can get to heaven by plucking out your eyes or cutting off your hands. But what Jesus is saying it would be better to be a maimed saint than a healthy sinner on his way to hell. Jesus is saying there is nothing that is more important than being saved. Nobody could accuse Jesus of being untruthful, and nobody could accuse Jesus of being unkind.

But not only do the words of Jesus teach that there's a hell, the death of Jesus demonstrates that there was, there is a hell. Now, be reasonable. If there's no hell from which men need to be saved, why did Jesus die? If there is no hell, then Calvary is the blunder of the ages. May I tell you that by the split that they placed into the face of Jesus, by every hair of His beard that they plucked from His head, by every last that was laid upon His back, by every thorn that pierced His brow, by the agony and the utter

midnight of Calvary, there is a hell. Why did Jesus die if there is no hell? I believe in hell because the justice of God demands it. Do you believe that a man can be a rapist or murderer or whatever, commit suicide, and it's all over? No. There is a judgment to face. There must be a time when things are made right, when equity does come. Somebody says, "I hate the idea of hell." Well, I do, too, but it's a fact. I'm sure that it broke the heart of the Lord Jesus, but it's a fact. You may hate rats and snakes, but they're facts. The fact that you hate something, disbelief in hell, does not change it.

Now, Jesus tells us what hell will be like, and I want you to listen. Hell is a place of misery. It's a place of sensual misery. You will feel in hell. In these verses that I read, in verse 23, 24 and 25, three times Jesus mentions the word torment. Hell is a place of torment. You're going to be tormented if you go to hell. From time immemorial, people have been asking, "Do you believe in literal fire in hell?" Let me put it this way. I believe in real fire in hell, real fire, whatever it is. Whether Jesus is speaking here in a metaphor of something that is even worse than the literal thing, it makes no difference. Jesus used the word fire. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 25, verse 41: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now, if you don't like the idea of fire in hell, take it up with Jesus. Don't take it up with Adrian because I'm just reading the Word of God today. Jesus spoke of fire. And, when I face the Lord, which I will, one of these days I will give an account of my preaching, I'd much rather Jesus say to me, "Adrian, you took My Word too literally," than to say, "Adrian, you explained it away." Now, whatever it is, whatever Jesus intends to convey by using the word fire, may I tell you, friend, you do not want to go there.

And not only is there going to be that sensual misery, there will be that emotional misery. Verse 25, Abram says to this rich man. "Son, remember..." Did you know that if you go to hell, you'll take your memory with you? Psychologists tell us that we never, ever, really, truly forget anything. Memory will sting like a hornet in hell. You will remember this service. You will remember this sermon. You will remember the prayers of your mother. You will remember every opportunity you had to be saved, and every time you stubbornly said no to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A young man was living wild and wicked. And as he was getting ready to go out, his things were there on the table by the front door. And his mother put a gospel tract there. When he saw it, he picked it up and it made him angry, and he crushed it. He said, "There's a tract. You give me a tract. Today at, at work somebody gave me a gospel tract. Where can I go where no one will give me one of these?" She said with a broken heart, "My son, in hell no one will give you one." You will remember that there was a preacher that stood here and, and begged you to come to Jesus. You will remember

that Debbie Gleason stood here and sang to you, “No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus.” You will remember that. “Son, remember...”

There was a man who said to a wise man, “I’ll, for \$100 I will teach you how to remember things.” The wise man said, “I’ll give you a \$1,000 if you’ll teach me how to forget some things.” But in hell you will remember.

And then not only is there that sensual misery, not only is there that emotional misery, there is an eternal misery. In verse 26 Abram says, “Look. You can’t come over here. We can’t go over there. There is a great gulf fixed. There is a chasm between the righteous and the unrighteous.” Now, in this life that chasm can be spanned. Thank God for the cross where if you’re on one side, you can come to the other side. And I love that song called Calvary. Oh the mighty gulf that God did span, at Calvary. But do you know what this verse teaches us in verse 26? There is no second chance. “It’s appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment.” There is the eternal misery.

There’s the spiritual misery. Verses 27 through 29, this man in hell says, “But look. I’ve got five brothers. Send somebody that he might witness to my brothers. Send Lazarus. Why, if somebody rose from the dead, they’d believe.” Of course, Jesus was prophesying the fact that though he would suffer, bleed, die, and rise from the dead, people still will not believe. And he said, “No, they have Moses and the prophets. They have the Old Testament. If they won’t believe that, they would not believe, though one rose from the dead.”

Now the sad thing is this: that this man in hell is now beginning to be concerned about his loved ones and it’s too late. Do you know what’s wrong with many of us in this building today? We’re going to wait until it’s too late to be concerned about our loved ones.

A woman called me on the phone. She said, “Pastor, Pastor, Pastor.” She was hysterical. I said, “Hold it. Get a hold of yourself.” She said, “Pastor.” I said, “What is wrong?” She said, “My daddy is in hell, my daddy is in hell, my daddy is in hell.” I said, “What makes you think your daddy’s in hell?” She said, “My daddy died this morning. My daddy was not saved. My daddy is in hell.” I said, “Your daddy’s not in hell.” She said, “Yes, my daddy wasn’t saved.” I said, “No, your daddy was saved.” I said, “I went by last week and talked to your daddy.” Her daddy was a medical doctor. “I asked your daddy if he knew Jesus and he said no. I asked him if he wanted to be saved, and he said yes.” And I said, “I prayed with your daddy. Your daddy gave his heart to Jesus Christ, put his hand in mine, and told me that he trusted Christ as his personal Savior.” I said, “Your daddy’s not in hell; your daddy’s in heaven. But I want to ask you a question. Did you witness to your Dad?” She said, “I was going to—I was going to.” I said, “If it had been up to you, your daddy would have been in hell.” Do you have a loved one,

somebody that you're going to speak to about this?

Here's a man, too late, saying "Send somebody to speak to my brothers about this thing." Oh, the spiritual misery of hell.

## Conclusion

Now, I must close this message, but I want to tell you something, friend. Listen to me. There is a hell. Five minutes after you die, you will be in hell and you will never come out. To get to hell, you're going to have to struggle to get there. If you go to hell, you'll have to work to go to hell. You'll take more difficulty to go to hell than you would go to heaven. You say, "Why do you say that?" You'll have to climb over some mountains to get to hell. You'll have to climb over this service, the music that we've sung, the prayers that we've prayed. You'll have to climb over God's Word that I've held in my hand today and preached to you. You're going to have to put this under your feet and climb over it in order to get to hell. You're going to have to climb over your own conscience, that is telling you right now, "Maybe I ought to give my heart to Jesus Christ and be saved." You're going to have to climb over that to get to hell. You're going to have to climb over the conviction of the Holy Spirit that's in this building today because I've prayed and asked God, and my wife and I have held hands this morning and prayed and asked God to speak. And I know God's Holy Spirit is working today. You're going to have to climb over that in order to get to hell. If you go to hell, you're going to have to climb over the blood-stained cross of Jesus Christ. You're going to have to climb over Mt. Calvary in order to get to hell. You're going to have to climb over the prayers of these people who have prayed for you that you might go to heaven. You're going to have to climb over those prayers in order to get to hell. You're going to have to climb over your better judgment to get to hell. But once you get there, you will not come out. But where, oh, where will my spirit be, five minutes after I die?

This may be the last worship service you'll ever be in. This may be the last gospel message you'll ever hear. I want to put it to you big, and plain, and straight. You don't have to go to hell. You can be saved. God loves you. Jesus died for you. Jesus invites you, and whosoever will may come. And I promise you, on the authority of this book that I preached from, if today, in repentance and faith, you will give your heart to Jesus Christ, sir, He will save you; lady, He will save you and He will keep you saved for all eternity. Don't gamble with your destiny.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads bowed and eyes are closed. Would you begin to pray for those round about you who may not know the Lord Jesus? I would ask that no one stirring, no one moving unless it is an emergency.

Father God. I pray today that many will come to Jesus. And, Lord, that they'll not

wonder about other people, that they will lay any pride in the dust, and, Lord, that they might humbly, joyfully acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior. In His name I pray.  
Amen.

# Five Minutes After Death

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 2, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 16:19–31

*“And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”*

LUKE 16:26

## Outline

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    - 1. The Words of Jesus Teach That There Is a Hell
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you find your place in the Word of God in Luke chapter 16? In a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 19. The title of our message: "Five Minutes After Death." As I have already said, the most amazing time you will ever spend is the first five minutes after you die. Man is the only creature that knows that he's going to die, and he's trying desperately to forget the fact that he's going to die. And if you mention death, there are people who will get a little nervous, and they will change the subject, very much like you do with your channel changer on television. They don't want to think about death. And many of us today don't see people die, because people die in hospitals today sequestered away, when they used to die at home. They die, many times, without a lot of pain, by the use of high-powered drugs. They're buried in a

cemetery as beautiful as a park.

We do everything we can do to disguise death. But, folks, reason and experience tell us that death is a real factor. We're going to die. I'm going to die. You're going to die. Death runs in my family, and it does in yours. And may I say this: Until you are prepared to die, you're not ready to live. No man is truly ready for life until he is no longer afraid to die. And so we're going to die; and the great issue is not merely death, but what happens after we die. We're going to look in a story today where Jesus pulls back the curtain and lets us look over into the next life. And, by the way, Jesus is the only one who can do that, and others writing in the Bible by divine inspiration. Other than that, all we can do is surmise or guess. But our Lord tells us about this time immediately after death.

Now it's amazing to me what people are interested in. So many today in the universities, they're interested in the origin of species, and Darwin wrote his book *The Origin of Species*. Well, we ought to be more interested, I would say, in the destiny of the species. I mean, from whence we've come, that's already an established fact. Now you may believe you came from monkeys. You ought to know your kinfolk better than I do. Well, friend, I want you to know, I'm not an orphan of the apes. I was made in the image of God. When I was made in the image of God, God breathed into my nostrils the breath of life. I became a living soul. I could no more cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist. There's something different about man than animals. Man has a spirit, and that spirit will go on, endless, timeless, dateless, measureless—on and on and on and on.

Now sooner or later, we're going to die, and they will hold our funeral.

*Loved ones will weep o'er my silent face,  
Dear ones will clasp me in sad embrace  
Shadows and darkness will fill the place,  
Five minutes after I die.*

*Faces that sorrow I will not see,  
Voices that murmur will not reach me  
But where, oh where will my spirit be?  
Five minutes after I die.*

*Naught to repair the good I lack  
Fixed to the goal of my chosen track,  
No room to repent, no turning back  
Five minutes after I die.*

*Mated for aye with my chosen throng  
Long is eternity, O so long*

*Then woe is me if my soul be wrong,  
Five minutes after I die.*

MARY VIRGINIA MACKEY STILLION

Jesus is the master teacher. And Jesus tells a story here in the Bible. Some call it a parable. The Bible doesn't call it a parable. Jesus doesn't call it a parable. As a matter of fact, in this story Jesus uses a man's name. In no other parable did Jesus use a man's name. We have no real reason to surmise that this is a parable. It maybe, and probably, is a historical event. But if it is a parable, the truth is the same, parabolic or not. Begin in verse 19. Here Jesus tells about two men and He contrasts two men: the rich man and the poor man. And Jesus said, *"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:"*—that is, every day he had his gourmet foods; he was a real gourmet—*"and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores."* (Luke 16:19–21) Can you imagine a man covered with running sores, dogs coming, licking those sores, flies on those sores? Here is this man trying to get some garbage left over from the rich man.

And Jesus says in verse 22, *"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou are tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, through one rose from the dead."* (Luke 16:22–31)

Now here's the story that Jesus told, and I say again that Jesus is the master storyteller. And I believe, however, He took a page from history, and beyond history he let us look into the next world. Three things I want you to see as we see the contrast between these two men.

## I. The Contrast in Life

First of all, there was a contrast in their lives. One was a fabulously wealthy man. The other was ignominiously poor. And there seems to be such an inequity in life. And think of the inequities in life.

### A. Congenital Inequities

There are congenital inequities. We say that all men are born equal: that's not true. They are equal before the law; but some people are born strong, some are born weak; some are born with a lot of intellectual fire power between their ears, others are not overloaded with that; some are very handsome or very beautiful, others are not. Congenitally, we're different. We wonder, "Why was I born with these particular genes and chromosomes? Why is the color of my hair as it is, the color of my skin, the color of my eyes, my height, my weight?" Some of you will spend a lot of money in gymnasiums trying to look like the man in the advertisement for briefs. But you'll never look like him. You'll look like a coke bottle, no matter what you do. Because that's just the way you are genetically built. Now you can help it a little bit, but you're not going to change it. There are congenital inequities.

### B. Material Inequities

And not only congenital inequities, but there are material inequities. Some are born into wealth; others are not. Now, do you look at people in some of these impoverished countries and think, "Boy, it's too bad they're not as smart as I am?" Do you think because you're sitting here well dressed, because you drove up here in a fine automobile and you had a nice, nutritious breakfast, that that's because of you? I tell you, if you were born in Sudan, it may be far different. If you were born in Ethiopia, it may be far different.

And I don't care how hard you work, or how ingenuous you are, there are certain material inequities. And don't you look down your nose at others who have less and think that somehow you are better than they. I can imagine the servant of this rich man as he was sitting there with his imported gourmet foods eating, and his servant says to the rich man, "Look, we've got some leftovers, some things I'm going to put in the garbage. Shall I take them out and give them to *you know who* sitting at the gate?" He said, "Good night, no! He'll never go away. That man disturbs me every time I see him. He's worthless. He's a ne'er-do-well. If he'd get up and work like the rest of us, he would have something. His problem is he has no ambition like I do.

Be careful when you talk that way, friend. Don't suppose that because you have what you have, it is simply because of you. The Bible asks this question: "What do we have that we have not received?" (1 Corinthians 4:7) So many times we look down upon the poor. Jesus did not. But there are in this life certain inequities.

### C. Social Inequities

There are congenital inequities. There are material inequities. There are social inequities. Some people are praised and petted. Some people are not looked upon at all. If they are looked upon, they're looked down on like this man was—as a nuisance, a beggar, a street person. He was someone for whom Jesus died. The rich man, everybody would say, “There's where so-and-so lives. Boy, look at that house behind those gates! That's some kind of place! You know, I wonder what it's like in there. I wonder if there's a magazine that tells about the lifestyle of the rich and the famous.” And they would say, “Hey, look at that thing”—looking at the poor man down there on the ground. “Get away from him. He might catch a disease. Is that not disgusting? Look, he's letting the dogs lick him.” You know, there are social inequities in life. And so what our Lord is doing here is showing that there is a contrast in life. And we have to admit there is.

But, you see, Jesus is going to deal with three great issues: life, death, and eternity. Every other issue is a subset of these three issues: life, death, and eternity. So He deals with life. But then He deals with death. Look, if you will, in verse 22 of this same chapter, and it says, “*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died.*” I don't care how rich he was: he died. The Bible says, “*The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.*” (Proverbs 22:2) And one thing you can say about the poor man: he's going to die. One thing you can say about the rich man is this: he is going to die.

Now when the beggar died, the Bible doesn't even say he was buried. It says the rich man was buried. It doesn't say the beggar was buried. The rich man was buried. Doubtless, they had a funeral for the rich man. They didn't have one for the poor man. Do you know what they would do sometimes with the poor? They would do like they do now sometimes in some third-world countries: they would gather them up and carry them out to the dump. We don't even know that he was buried. Sometimes the animals would eat the flesh of the dead. They put them out there on the dump and let them burn and be cremated out there: no burial, no funeral, nothing. It doesn't say anything about his burial.

But it says the rich man died and he was buried. Can you imagine what kind of a funeral he must have had? Let's put it in today's parlance. There's the rich man. He's lying there in his bronze, silk-lined casket. He's there. They have fixed him up very nice. He's wearing an expensive suit and there are flowers from one side to the other. It's a riot of color. You walk in: you can smell the perfume. And I'm telling you, out in front are all of the Mercedes, the Lexus, the fine automobiles—and I'll have to say some Lincolns are out there, because we have someone who sells those. All these fine automobiles are out there in front, you know. And the people come in. And the mayor is there, and all

of the dignitaries are there, and they're talking about this man, how much he's done for the community, how successful he is; and they talk about his philanthropy, they talk about all of these things that this man did, and they eulogize him; and he's there. But, you know, everything they say about him doesn't change his destiny at all, not one whit. As we're going to see, this man was in hell before the undertaker learned that he was dead.

## II. The Contrast in Death

But they both died, and there was such a contrast in their death. But what I'm trying to say to you is this: Death is very real and death is very impartial. Doctors die. Bankers die. One day, the doctor will write his last prescription. One day, the banker will sign his last document. Preachers die. One day, the preacher will preach his last sermon. Little babies sometimes die. Children have to drop their toys and grapple with the iron strength of death. Students die. I've preached funerals for people of all ages. Life is as long as a piece of string, and that can be any length. You don't know when you're going to die. The Psalmist says, *"There is but a step between me and death."* (1 Samuel 20:3) That little heartbeat: that's all there is between me and heaven or between me and hell. That's it: that little heartbeat. *"There is but a step between me and death."*

I was holding a funeral. I stood there with the undertaker and a prominent businessman, and we were talking about how people die in strange circumstances. And we became quite philosophical—the preacher, the businessman, and the mortician. In a matter of days both the businessman and the mortician were dead; just in a matter of days, less than a week, they had both died. And I thought, "There we were, standing, talking about death."

I had a friend in seminary. He and I used to commute back and forth from our church field to the seminary while we had student pastorates. His name was Bob. He was one of the finest soul winners I've ever known, a big, tall, sun-crowned man, and he had a big grin from ear to ear. And, oh, God used him in a mighty way. He had a passion for souls. One day he said to me, "Adrian, there's an old man that lives on your church field. His name is Mr. Bourgeois." And he said, "Adrian, he doesn't know how to be saved, and he's had a severe heart attack. He's had a number of them." And the way he put it to me is, "Adrian, he has one foot in the grave and another on a banana peel"—just saying that he was just so close to death. He said, "Adrian, would you go by and tell Mr. Bourgeois how to be saved?" I said, "Bob, I will."

He lived on my church field. I went and knocked on the door. He came to the door. He had a French accent: "Hello." I said, "Mr. Bourgeois?" "Yes." "Mr. Bourgeois, my name is Adrian Rogers. I'm a Baptist pastor. I'd like to come in and get acquainted with you. Mr. Bourgeois, I'd like to tell you about Jesus and how you can know that when you

die you're going straight to heaven. Would you like that?" He said, "*Oui*. Come in." I came in. I sat down and explained to Mr. Bourgeois how to be saved. And he listened carefully, bowed his head, and prayed with me and asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart. So far as I know, he was wondrously saved. And I thank God for that. But that's not the end of the story.

A few days after that, my friend, Bob, the one who asked me to go and see Mr. Bourgeois, was having lunch with his wife in their little parlor. After lunch, he took a napkin, patted his mouth with the napkin, stepped away from the table, took a few steps, gave a gasp, and fell on the floor dead. A young man in his twenties—healthy, tall, sun-crowned. He said to me, seemingly healthy, "Adrian, Mr. Bourgeois only has a few days to live." Folks, Mr. Bourgeois lived for years. It was Bob who only had a few days to live.

You know, we're always saying, "Tell them; tell them they're going to die." No, *we're* going to die. *I'm* going to die. This may be the last sermon that I'll ever preach. It may be the last sermon you'll ever hear. And no one knows the day that he's going to die. "*It is appointed unto men once to die.*" (Hebrews 9:27) "*There is but a step between me and death.*" And so we don't know when we're going to die.

### **III. The Contrast in Eternity**

And so here is a contrast in the way that these two men died. But they both died. One man had a fine funeral; the other probably had none at all. A contrast in life. A contrast in death. But now I want to tighten the focus and I want you to see a contrast in eternity, because what we're talking about now is after death. Look, if you will, in verse 23 of this same chapter. It speaks of the rich man who died and was buried, "*And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*"

Now both of these men died, and both of them had an eternity to face. And so do you. There's a life to live, a death to die, and an eternity to face. Now Jesus gives us a look into the next world. And Jesus teaches us by divine inspiration and revelation that death does not mean extinction. There's a difference between you and an animal. You don't die like a cow or a dog. You live on and on and on. Death is not annihilation. Death is not extinction. Your soul will be in existence somewhere throughout all eternity.

I read that somewhere on a tombstone are these words; a man had this inscribed on his tombstone, or someone did it for him in an old country graveyard: "Pause, stranger, as you pass me by. As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. Prepare to die and follow me." Somebody wrote underneath that: "To follow you, I am not content, until I know which way you went."

Now we're going to die, but not everybody is going to go to the same place. There is a contrast not only in life and in death, but there is a contrast in eternity.

## A. The Glories of Heaven

Now, think, for example, of the glories of heaven. In verse 22, it says, “*The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.*” Now, what on the earth does that mean? Well, first of all, he had an angel convoy to bring him home.

*Oh, come, angel band,  
Come and around me stand;  
Oh, bear me away on your snowy wings  
To my eternal home.*

JEFFERSON HASCALL

How wonderful, when our feet touch those chilly water of Jordan, to see those angels come and to bring us on the glory! How wonderful that will be! He is carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.

What does that mean: “*Abraham’s bosom*”? Well, Abraham was the father of the faithful. He is talking to Jews now. Abraham, the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven. Abraham. To be with Abraham was glorious; but “*Abraham’s bosom*,” what does that mean? Well, in Bible times, when they had a banquet or feast, if you would sit at the proper position at the table, they would recline at the table. They would lie down and put their left arm down like this and use their right hand to eat with. And they didn’t eat sitting up. And these oriental banquets were this way. The place of honor, the chief place, would be where your head would be right at the chest of the host, his bosom. That’s what he’s talking about. What he’s saying is, this poor man, who had been feeding on crumbs, is now at the honored place at a banquet, at a feast. He is now in Abraham’s bosom. That’s what Jesus is saying. “Many who are first shall be last, and many who are last shall be first.” (Matthew 19:30; Mark 10:31) Many of this earth’s little nobodies are going to be somebodies up in heaven. What a difference heaven will make! There he is. He had been feeding on crumbs, and now he is with the highest of the high at a banquet in the glory. That’s what heaven is like. Oh, he’s speaking here of the glories of heaven.

Now I would like to take time in this message to elucidate and to expostulate and to speak about heaven, but I can’t do that, because I want to speak more about hell. You say, “Well, why would you want to speak more about hell than you would about heaven?” Because we hear far more about heaven than we hear about hell today. People don’t want to hear about hell today; but I’m going to tell you about hell, because what Jesus of speaking of primarily in this parable is five minutes after death for the man, the Christ-rejecter, the one who has not yet repented of his or her sins. And so I want to talk to you about that.

But let me just say this word about heaven. What will heaven be like? Well, I don’t know. You don’t know. We have some glimpses of the glory. But heaven will be this: It

will be all that the loving heart of God would desire for you. It will be all that the omniscient mind of God can conceive for you. It will be all that the omnipotent hand of God can perform and prepare for you. And I'll promise you this: You'll like it.

When I was a little boy, I used to think about going to heaven, and I thought, "Well, you know, I hope to go to heaven some day, but I don't want to go right away. I want to swim. I want to fish. I want to play. And then I thought, you know, when I was in my teens, "I want to get married." Have you ever felt that way? "Heaven is all right, but not right now. There are some other things I want to do." And I had the idea that heaven would be second best. No. Listen, friend. All of the things put together that you treasure here are nothing to be compared to what we will have in heaven.

I heard Billy Graham one time on the Johnny Carson Show, and I thought, "O God, help Billy. Lord, give him wisdom as he's talking to Johnny Carson." And Johnny, kind of in a smart aleck way, said to Billy, "Well, Billy, will there be golf in heaven?" I thought, "What will Billy say?" His answer was classic, and I think it was a great answer. He said, "Johnny, if you get to heaven, and if golf is necessary for your joy, yes, there will be golf in heaven." That's a great answer. Whatever it takes, friend, God loves you.

Now, don't get your hopes up, Mark. I'm not saying there's going to be golf in heaven. But I am saying this: that heaven is all that the benevolent, loving hand and heart of God and mind of God can give to those of us. And Jesus just takes this one verse, verse 22, and calls it a banquet. When I invite you to Jesus, I'm not inviting you to a funeral, but to a feast—to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **B. The Agonies of Hell**

But think now about the rich man. He died, and the Bible says, "*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.*"

### **1. The Words of Jesus Teach That There Is a Hell**

"Adrian, don't tell me you believe in hell. Adrian, haven't you been to college?" I've been accused of that. "Haven't you been to seminary?" Yes. "You believe in hell?" Yes. "Why do you believe in hell?" Because of what I'm reading from the Word of God.

It makes no difference to me if all the scientists and philosophers and the poets and the teachers and the artists and the movers and the shakers and the entrepreneurs and the liberal theologians have changed their minds about hell. The Word of God endures. I would be less than honest with you if I were to try somehow to explain away hell. And I realize that the task that I have today is a difficult one, because people now have made hell the object and the butt of jokes and folklore. And the preacher today who preaches on hell is called one of two things, or both: he's called either cruel or ignorant, or cruel and ignorant. But I remind you again this is a story that Jesus told. I am reading from One who was neither ignorant nor cruel. And the cruelest thing that I could do would be

to believe that there is a hell and not to warn you of it.

Yes, I believe in hell. There is a hell. I remind you that scoffers don't change. People scoffed at Noah. But the flood came. (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5) People scoffed at Lot. But Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire and brimstone. (2 Peter 2:6–8) People scoffed at Daniel. But Belshazzar was slain that night when the judgment came. (Daniel 5) Why do I believe in hell? As I've already said, Jesus taught it. In the Bible there are at least 162 texts in the New Testament that deal with the doom of the lost sinner—162! Over seventy of these were uttered by Jesus Christ Himself. So if you don't believe in hell, you're really taking issue with Jesus Christ.

## **2. The Death of Jesus Teaches That There is a Hell**

Now I believe in hell because Jesus taught it. And I believe in hell because the death of Jesus demonstrates it. Be reasonable with me. If there is no hell from which people need to be saved, why did Jesus die? Did Jesus die upon that cross to save you from a non-existent destiny? Listen. By every bruise laid upon His face; by every foul mouthful of spit that was spat into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ; by every hair of His beard that was plucked from His cheeks; by every agonizing point of the thorns upon His head; by every lash that was laid upon His back; by every drop of blood that fell to the ground; by the heartache and the agony and the utter midnight of dark Calvary, I declare to you there is a hell. You will never convince me that God allowed His Son to die to save us from a place that doesn't exist. If there is no hell, Calvary was the blunder of the ages.

## **3. The Justice of God Demands That There Be a Hell**

I believe in hell because Jesus taught it. I believe in hell because of Calvary. I believe in hell because the justice of God demands it. Do you think that a man can rape a child, or abuse a teen, or that a man can steal and cheat and connive, or a man can blaspheme and hate God, a man can live wildly and lasciviously and wickedly, and then at the end of his life just die and it's all over? No. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine. And God says, "Revenge is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

Friend, the inequities in life will not continue after death. There are inequities in life. There are not inequities in destiny. And so the very justice of God demands that there be a hell. If there is no hell, there is no heaven. For the same Bible that tells us about heaven tells us about hell. And so we know there is a hell.

Now, what will hell be like? Again, we're not interested in your imagination. Let's look into the Word of God, and again we're looking into the story of Jesus.

## **4. Hell Is a Place of Sensual Misery**

First of all, I want to tell you that hell is a place of misery. It's a place of sensual misery.

That is, you will carry your feelings, your sensual feelings, to heaven. If you'll look in God's Word there in verse 23, 24, and 25, there's one word that is found in all three of those verses—and it is the word *torment*. Hell is a place of torment. I didn't say torture. Don't get the idea that God is there torturing people. People are tormented in hell. And it is a self-inflicted torment. And the door in hell is locked from the inside. The rich man said, "*I am tormented in this flame.*" Jehovah's Witnesses will tell you that once a man dies, he's dead; there is no consciousness in hell. Well, I had rather believe what Jesus believes than what they believe. I just take the Word of God. He said, "*I am tormented in this flame.*"

That brings an interesting question: "Adrian, is the fire in hell real?" Yes, it's real. "Is it literal?" I don't know. It may be figurative. But it makes no difference. I mean, whether He's talking about figurative fire or literal fire, He's talking about real fire. What I'm trying to say is this: He's speaking of something that torments. You say, "Oh, another one of those hellfire and brimstone preachers." I'm quoting Jesus, friend. I'm quoting the Word of God. Jesus said in Matthew 25, verse 41, "*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*" (Matthew 25:41) If you go to hell, you'll be an intruder. Hell was not prepared for you; it was prepared for the devil and his angels. But if you choose to follow Satan, you'll follow him into hell. Hell is a place of torment.

I'll tell you, when I face God—and I'm going to face Him—I'm going to have to give an account for the way I preached. I had much rather God say to me, "Adrian, when you preached on hell, you took my Word too literally"; I had much rather Him say that to me than, "Adrian, when you preached on hell, you explained it away and you did not take my Word seriously." I'm going to preach it like God wrote it. Here's a man who said, "I am tormented in this flame." Don't water that down. Don't try to explain that away.

## **5. Hell Is a Place of Emotional Misery**

It's a place of sensual misery. It's a place of emotional misery. In verse 25, Abraham says to this rich man, "*Son, remember.*" You will carry your memory to hell. Psychologists tell us that we never, never forget anything—nothing! You say, "Oh, I've forgotten many things." They are there stored in your brain; but push the right button, and they'll come back. If you go to hell, you will remember. You will remember every lie you ever told, every dirty joke, every time you took God's name in vain, every gray hair you gave your mother, and every wrinkle you pinched into your father's brow. You will remember this service. You will remember this man standing here on this platform with this hand up and this hand in his pocket looking at you and saying, "Don't go to hell." You'll remember it. You'll remember Debbie Gleason standing here, looking like an angel and singing, "No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus." You will remember. You will remember the people who prayed for you and begged you and pled with you to

come to Christ. “Son, remember.”

A man told another man, “For a hundred dollars I will teach you how to remember things.” The man said, “I’ll give you a thousand dollars if you’ll teach me how to forget some things.” There are some things, friend, that you will carry with you for all eternity.

## **6. Hell Is a Place of Spiritual Misery**

There is sensual suffering. There is emotional suffering. There is spiritual suffering. In this passage of Scripture, this man says, “Look. Send Lazarus that he might warn my brothers. Don’t let them come to this place.” Some people in hell have what the people on this earth need—and that is a concern over the lost while you have a chance, while you have an opportunity.

A woman called me on the phone: “Pastor Rogers! Pastor Rogers! Pastor Rogers! Pastor! Pastor!” I said, “Hold it. Get a hold of yourself.” “Oh, Pastor!” I said, “What is wrong?” She said, “My daddy! My daddy is in hell! My daddy is in hell!” I said, “What makes you think your daddy is in hell?” She said, “My daddy died this morning suddenly. My daddy is in hell.” I said, “Your daddy is not in hell.” She said, “Why do you say that? How do you know?” I said, “Your daddy is not in hell. I went by this week to speak with your father.” He was a medical doctor. “I asked him if he were saved. He said *no*. I asked him if he wanted to be saved. He said *yes*. And we prayed, and he gave his heart to Jesus Christ and trusted Christ as his personal Savior and Lord.” I said, “Your daddy is not in hell. Your daddy is in heaven. But now I want to ask you a question: Did you witness to your daddy? Did you share Jesus Christ with your father?” She said, “I was going to.” I said, “Had it been up to you, your daddy would have been in hell.”

Here was a man with spiritual anguish, thinking about others. And, by the way, if you go to hell, you’ll probably carry some brothers with you; you’ll carry some sisters with you; some fathers, some mothers, some children. Nobody goes to hell alone—and that is part of the hell of hell. But, friend, this sensual suffering and this emotional suffering is eternal misery. There is a great gulf fixed. Don’t get the idea that you’ll stay in hell for a while and then somehow step over into heaven.

What is this passage of Scripture teaching? This passage of Scripture teaches that there is life after death, but there is no second chance after death. As I said when I preached on the judgment, if you want mercy, you may have it; if you want forgiveness, you may have it; but you must have it now. There is great gulf fixed. Do you know why Jesus Christ died upon the cross? To span that gulf. I love that song called “At Calvary.” “Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary”—where Jesus died and made a bridge with the roughhewn timbers of a cross, from condemnation to salvation, from death to life. “And I must needs go home by the way of the cross.” But if you say *no*, then no longer does that bridge exist for you. There is a great gulf, a chasm, that you

cannot cross.

Hell is a very real place. And it's a place of eternal misery. Revelation 14, verse 11: *"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night."* (Revelation 14:11)

## Conclusion

Now I close this message. Look at me. God sent me here to tell you something. He loves you. He wants you to be saved. If you don't get saved, I'm telling you that you will take more difficulty to go to hell than you would to go to heaven. You're going to have to climb into hell. God has put some mountains, some blockades, between you and hell. And you're going to have to climb over those mountains, go around those blockades to get into hell. "Adrian, what do you mean?" You're going to have to climb over this service. That's the reason I'm preaching these salvation messages. You're going to have to climb over this service in order to get to hell. You're going to have to climb over this book, the Word of God, in order to get to hell. God gave you this book. You're going to have to step right over it in order to get to hell. You're going to have to climb over the prayers of God's people in order to get to hell. This man prayed this morning; I heard him praying, "O God, help people today to say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ." You're going to have to climb over that prayer to go to hell. You're going to have to climb over every gospel witness that you've ever heard in order to go to hell.

A young man, going out for a night on the town, whose heartbroken mother had been praying for him, gave him a tract. He said, "Mother, don't give me a tract. Somebody at work gave me a tract today. Where can I ever go where somebody won't give me one of these?" The brokenhearted mother said, "Son, in hell, nobody will give you one."

You're going to have to climb over your mother's prayers. You're going to have to climb over the witness of people. You're going to have to climb over the convicting power of the Holy Spirit of God. I'm just a preacher, but the apostle said, *"We are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."* (Acts 5:32) And I have prayed from my heart that God the Holy Spirit will speak to you. And I know He's speaking. And you're going to have to do *"despite unto the Spirit of grace"* in order to climb into hell. (Hebrews 10:29) I'll tell you what else you're going to have to climb over: you're going to have to climb over the love of God shown on that cross. You're going to have to climb over bloody Calvary to get to hell. For God put the bloodstained cross of Jesus Christ there as a barricade. And Jesus is saying, "Stop! Don't go to hell! I paid for that sin! I love you!"

Every star that you see in the sky is God's love in diamonds. Every flower that blooms is God's love in blossom. Every river that flows is God's love in motion. God is

saying to you, "I love you, and I want to save you." And I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you, and He will keep you saved, if you trust Him. And if you die and go to hell, I'm telling you, you will have climbed over every barricade and every mountain that God has put to keep you from going there. Why? Why would you do it? Why? Don't do it. Don't do it. Give your heart to Jesus. Trust Him. *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."* (Isaiah 1:18) He loves you and He sent me here to tell you.

# Prayer: Its Force, Its Course, and Its Source

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 1, 1977**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 18:1**

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## Introduction

Now, turn to Luke, chapter 18, and verse 1—Luke, chapter 18, and verse 1. I want us to think on this subject: “Prayer: Its Force, Its Course, and Its Source.” I believe that Christians fail more in the prayer life than in any other area, and I believe, dear friend, that I don't have a failure—and you don't have a failure—in other areas that is not really somehow related to that failure in our prayer lives. Christians need to pray; Baptists need to pray; and Bellevue Baptist needs to pray. I need to pray, and you need to pray. So, I want us to think tonight on prayer—just a very simple message, somewhat topical, as we think on prayer. Now, in Luke 18, verse 1, the Bible says: “*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray*” (Luke 18:1)—men ought always to pray. Now, dear friend, that is what Jesus said. And, if you don't pray, then you sin, because men ought always to pray. 1 Samuel 12, verse 23, says: “*God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you*” (1 Samuel 12:23).

Now, why should you pray? Why should I pray? God said to. Is there a better reason for doing anything? As a matter of fact, not only does the Scripture say, in Luke 18,

verse 1, that men ought always to pray, and not only does the Bible teach that failure to pray is a sin, but you know, the Bible also says that, in Philippians, chapter 4, verse 6, that we're to *"be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"* (Philippians 4:6). Not only should we pray, not only is failure to pray a sin, but we are to pray about everything: *"in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"* (Philippians 4:6). We are to virtually live by prayer.

You say, "Well, you can't pray about everything." Well, dear friend, if there's anything that you can't pray about, then you'd better stop doing it. That's a pretty good indication that you're doing something that you've got no business doing, but let me go on further. The Bible says, in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, and verse 17: *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Not only should we pray, not only is failure to pray a sin, not only should we pray about everything, but we also ought to pray without ceasing. We ought to pray day-in and day-out, 24 hours a day. You say, "Now, Pastor, no one can pray without ceasing. After all, you have to eat; after all, you have to sleep. You just can't have your mind on God all of the time." Well, dear friend, while your mind may be occupied, and while your body may be occupied, your spirit is to be in communion with God 24 hours a day. You're to pray without ceasing.

Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. Here is a mother whose child is sick, and this child has been running a fever, say, for two or three days, and has been terribly sick. And finally, the fever has broken, and the mother has that child asleep. And, the mother has not had but just a few hours of sleep over a period of three or four days. She now decides that she can get some sleep, and that she will lay down in the room beside that sick baby, and that she will go to sleep. And, while she sleeps, perhaps, the siren of an ambulance will go through the neighborhood that will not awaken her. Some boys will be playing baseball in the schoolyard, and that won't awaken her. The dog will bark—she's not awake. The television will blare—that doesn't disturb her. But, one whimper from that baby, and she's awake. Now, why is that? Why is that? Even while she is asleep, her heart—her mind—is attuned to that infant, right? Now, that's the way a person is.

Did you know that I prayed all night last night, thinking about preaching this morning? Just all night—I would wake up in the middle of the night and be conscious of the fact that I was attuned to the Lord, thinking of the Lord, and thinking about what I was going to preach.

Why, one of the greatest preachers Southern Baptists ever had was a man named George W. Truett. He used to pastor the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. And, one time, George Truett had to have surgery, and they put him under. And, you know,

people are a little bit concerned, sometimes, when they are put under for surgery, because when we get going under, sometimes, we get a little giddy and say things that don't make sense—non-sensible things. And, you know, people who have had good character and morals have even been known to curse, swear, and do things that they ordinarily would not do. And so, people have been somewhat concerned about that.

And, Dr. Truett, after his surgery, called the nurse. And, he said, “Nurse, I want to ask you a question: Were you in there when I was being put asleep and while the surgery was going on?” And, she said, “Yes sir, I was, Dr. Truett.” “I want you to answer a question for me: Did I say anything that I ought not to have said. Did I say anything that would dishonor my Lord?” She just smiled and said, “No, Dr. Truett, not at all.” He said, “Well, what did I do?” “Oh,” she said, “You preached awhile, and then, you prayed awhile. And, you preached awhile, and then, you prayed a while.”

Isn't that remarkable? Here is a man, you see, so attuned to God, that even while in surgery, when they're getting ready to perform, and while he was going under the anesthesia, here he is thinking of the Lord. We ought to pray without ceasing—that doesn't mean that our lips are moving all the time, but it does mean that constantly—moment by moment by moment—we are to be in communion with God.

## I. The Force of Prayer

### A. Prayer Can Supply Your Every Need

Now, let's think, first of all, about the force of prayer. Oh friend, prayer is so powerful—for prayer can do anything that God can do, and God can do anything. There's nothing that lies outside the reach of prayer, except that that lies outside the reach of God. Prayer is God's way to bless you. You see, God wants to bless you. Prayer *is not overcoming God's* reluctance; *prayer is laying hold of God's* willingness. And, James says, in James, chapter 4, and verse 2: “*Ye have not, because ye ask not*” (James 4:2).

Did you know that there are many blessings that God has for you that you have not yet obtained, because you have not prayed for them? Did you know that God has blessings that are getting mildewed and rusted, that God has blessings in Heaven that He wants to give you, and yet, you do not have them, because you do not ask? Dear friend, fighting and war, scheming and lusting—they're not God's ways for His people to get what they need. I tell you, every need that you have, my God wants to supply. “*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19). “Oh,” you say, “I know some Christians who are not having their needs met.” Huh? I do too, and why not? They have not, because they ask not. We punish ourselves by failing to pray.

## B. Prayer Has the Power to Fill Your Heart with Joy

Now, we're thinking about the force of prayer, and I'm saying that prayer can supply your every need. Prayer can supply your every need; *there's nothing that lies outside the reach of prayer, except that that lies outside the will of God*. But, not only is prayer God's way to bless Christians, prayer is God's way for Christians to have joy—fullness of joy. Not every Christian is joyful, some Christians are backslidden; but, just as we are to pray without ceasing, the Bible says that we are to rejoice always—always rejoicing. A Christian ought to live with a heart gleaming full of joy, but some people don't; and, do you know why? They don't know how to pray. Listen to the Scripture in John, chapter 16, and verse 24—Jesus said: *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full”*—that your joy may be full. *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full”* (John 16:24). Now, God doesn't want His people to go around sad and defeated—that's no advertisement for Him. God wants His people to be full of joy all of the time.

Now, you don't have to be happy all of the time. This will be relief to some of you: You don't have to be happy. I wouldn't want to be happy all of the time. It'd be like having ice cream for every meal. But, dear friend, while you cannot be happy all the time, you ought to be filled with joy all of the time. I hope you know the difference between joy and happiness. Happiness depends upon what happens—that's why we call it *happiness*. If your *hap* is good—you're happy; if your *hap* is bad—you're unhappy. But, dear friend, whether your *hap* is good or your *hap* is bad, Jesus is on the throne. And, if He's in our hearts, and our prayers are being answered, then the joy bell ought to be ringing. *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full”* (John 16:24). *You show me a Christian who is not full of joy, and I'll show you Christian whose prayer life is lacking*. Joy comes through answered prayer.

## C. Prayer Is God's Cure for Worry and Anxious Care

Now, we're just talking about the force of prayer, and I'm saying that prayer has power to supply what you need. I'm saying that your prayer has power to fill your heart with joy. Thirdly, prayer is God's cure for worry and anxious care. Did you know that I'm looking at some A-number-One worrywarts? Some of us are worriers. Now, one great man of God said, “I would no more worry than I would curse or swear” (John Wesley). Worry is an insult to God. Worry is just your way of saying, “God, I don't believe that You're able to take care of the situation. Worry *is the opposite of faith—you take faith and turn it around, and you have worry; take worry and turn it around, and you have faith*.”

Now, when I say that a Christian ought not to worry, I don't mean that a Christian won't have troubles—certainly, a Christian will have troubles. But, dear friend, the Bible says, in 1 Peter 5, verse 7: “*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*” (1 Peter 5:7). When we have burdens, the Lord gives us those burdens so that we can take them to Him. Have you ever heard that song, “Take Your Burdens to the Lord and Leave Them There?” So many of us take our burdens to the Lord, all right. We come, we get that ole' heavy bag of burdens on our back, and we take them and shake them all out, and so feed them and spread them out and say, “Lord, look at this, and Lord, look at that—look at that, Lord.” Then, what do we do? We pick them all up, put them back in the bag and back on our shoulders, and off we go. Now, friend, take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. “*Commit thy way unto the LORD*” (Psalm 37:5).

Have you ever put any money in the bank? You say, “Rarely.” But, suppose that you had cash right up here in your pocket. Let's say—suppose—you have \$100,000 cash, and you say, “Yes, let's suppose.” But, let's suppose that you have \$100,000 cash in an envelope, and you're just worried. You say, “I'm going to lose that. Somebody is going to mug me or rob me, or I'm going to misplace it—something is going to happen. I just don't want to carry this much cash around.” What do you do? You carry it down to the bank. You say, “I want to make a deposit,” and you fill out a deposit slip. And, you take that envelope full of money, and you shove it right toward that teller—right beneath that little cage there. And, he or she reaches out and takes it, gives you a receipt, and then, they put it in their vault.

Do you know what you did? You committed that money; you committed it. You said, “There, now.” Once you commit it you, just feel like this: “Boy, I'm glad that's over—I'm glad that I have put that in the bank.” Now, you don't get a couple of Krystals and sit down on the front steps of the bank and say, “I'm going to protect this money.” If you didn't think that they could take care of it, then you wouldn't have committed it to them, you see.

Now, friend, that's what you do with your problems—you just simply say, “Lord, I commit that to you.” Do you ever have difficulty going to sleep some nights? You just have things that are going around and around in your head? You need to learn how to take that and just tie a ribbon around it, and say, “Lord I commit that to You. I'm going to sleep. I'm going to sleep.” He says that His beloved sleep. “*Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass*” (Psalm 37:5). “*Casting all of your cares upon Him, for He cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7). “What a friend we have in Jesus,”—we just sang—“all our sins and griefs to bear; what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! Oh, what peace we often forfeit! Oh, what needless pain we bear! All

because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” Oh, what a force is prayer! It is God’s cure—God’s way—for anxious care.

#### **D. Prayer Is God’s Way to Bring the Lost to Him**

The Bible says: *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6–7). Now, I want to say the force of prayer is powerful, because it is God’s way—it is God’s way to bring the lost to Him. We are to pray to the Lord, to bind the devil in prayer, to pray for soul winners, and to pray for the Church triumphant, that we might go out and win souls to Jesus. And, there’s no way that this church can evangelize this community unless she goes forth on her knees.

## **II. The Course of Prayer**

I would like to speak some more about the force of prayer, but I’ll not get finished, so let’s go on and think a little bit about the course of prayer. Not only do we pray to an omnipotent Father, and that is the force of prayer; but also, we pray through a loving Savior, and that is the force of prayer. Prayer comes to the Father through the Savior—through the Savior. Jesus said: *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full”* (John 16:24). We’ve already quoted that verse, but now, let’s not think about the joy part, but let’s think about the name of Jesus. *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name”* (John 16:24). “In my name”—that is the course of prayer. If you want your prayer to get to Heaven, then you must send it to Heaven through the Savior. *“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 2:5). And, we pray in the name of Jesus.

Now, what does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? It does not mean—contrary to popular opinion—to say that, when you’re finished, praying, “in Jesus’ name.” Now, most of us do that. I think that I do it most every prayer that I pray. But, you know something interesting? You will not find one prayer in the Bible that closes with that phrase. Read all of the prayers in the Bible, and not once will you find one recorded prayer in the Bible where Paul or anybody else prayed, and he closes his prayer with sort of a sign off—“in Jesus’ name.” I don’t think that there’s anything wrong with that, but I’m just simply saying that is not what it means to pray in Jesus’ name. It means, number one, to pray as His child—and therefore, you must be born again; number two, it means to pray with His authority. *Name* means, “authority”—authority.

For example, yesterday, I went to the lumber store to buy some 2 x 4s to fix a fence—I bought four 2 x 4s. I went into the hardware store, and I said, “I want four 2 x

4s.” And so, the man gave me a sheet of paper and wrote out there that I had paid for four 2 x 4s and signed his name. And then, I went over to the lumberyard, and I handed that man that sheet of paper, and down there, at the bottom, was the signature of this man that I had paid. And, when they saw that sheet of paper duly signed, they gave me four 2 x 4s. Now, what I was doing: I was offering a prayer to the guy who handles the 2 x 4s; and, the name of the guy behind the desk, you see...—because his name was on there, my prayer was answered. Now, I just didn’t walk up and say, “Give me four 2 x 4s.” You see, he would have said, “Who are you?” But, you see, I came in the name of someone else. His name was affixed, and so, I had the authority.

Or, you know, I could write a check—let’s go back to \$100,000. I write a check for \$100,000 and go here to the First National Bank, shove it under the teller’s cage, and do you know what happens next? The next scene is in jail, ha! All right, but if Mr. Rockefeller or somebody writes a check and signs his name for \$100,000, then the bank has the authority to cash that check and so forth, because he had the money. He has the wherewithal. *Name* means “authority.”

When a policeman stands out here, in front of an automobile, he says, “Stop, in the name of the law.” He can even stand in front of a semi-truck: a 150-pound policeman can stop a semi-truck—he stops it with authority. “In the name of the law”—he is praying to that truck, he prays to that driver, and he says, “In the name of the law, answer my prayer,” and the driver decides that he will answer that prayer, because of the name that is behind it. Now, that’s what it means to pray in Jesus’ name—it means to pray with His approval, and with His authority.

Now, sometimes we misuse that authority, or we think that we do. Suppose that I go to my neighbor, Morris Mills, and suppose that I’m a policeman and that I say, “Morris Mills, in the name of the law, loan me your lawnmower.” Now, what’s that got to do with being a policeman? But I say, “Well, it works on other occasions. Why can’t I just say, ‘In the name of the law, loan me your lawnmower?’” Because that doesn’t have anything to do with it.

Now, sometimes, we want to superimpose Jesus’ name on things that Jesus is not concerned about—things that Jesus has not ordered. Now, the course of prayer is that prayer must come to God through Jesus Christ. We must pray about the things of which He approved, and then we must pray in His authority. And, dear friend, when I have the authority of Jesus behind my prayers, all Heaven and earth, and Hell beneath, will bow to the name of Jesus—that Name that is above every name.

### **III. The Source of Prayer**

Now, thirdly and finally, but not immediately, let me speak to you about the source of

our prayer. Now, the force of our prayer is God Almighty, who can do anything. And, if the course of my prayer is Jesus Christ, who brings it to the Father, then the source of my prayer must be the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit. Now, you see what prayer is. When a person prays, he prays in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. That is prayer that is powerful, and that is prayer that travails. Now, I suppose that, out of all of these concepts, praying in the Spirit is perhaps, to most of us, the foggiest. But, dear friend, your prayer, again, will not be answered, unless you pray in the Spirit. The Bible says, in Ephesians, chapter 6, and verse 18: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 6:18)—praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. Jude 1:20 says, *“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost”* (Jude 1:20). We ought to pray in the Spirit.

Now, take your Bibles, and turn to Romans 8, for a moment, and let’s look at the key verse. Romans 8:26: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities”* (Romans 8:26). Now, we’re weak, and you say, “Oh, my weakness is a liability.” No, it is not; your weakness is not a liability. Your weakness is an asset, for the Bible says: *“For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Corinthians 12:10). God made us weak, that we would not depend upon ourselves—so that we would depend upon our grand and glorious Holy Spirit. Now, *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God”* (Romans 8:26–27). Now, this is the source of our prayer. It is really the Holy Spirit of God forming the prayer in us and sending it through the Savior to the Father.

I heard a beautiful definition of prayer, awhile back, and this is what it is: “Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, and then putting that desire into our hearts, and then sending it back to Heaven in the power of the cross—that’s prayer.” That’s a good definition of prayer—the Holy Spirit finding the desire in the heart of the Father, implanting that desire in our hearts, and then sending it to Heaven in the power of the cross, in the power of the blood of Jesus. You see, you and I have some real problems. The reason why we won’t pray, and the reason why we’re not victorious in prayer, is primarily that we do not pray in the Spirit. I think that most of us pray to the Father, and I think that most of us pray to the Son, but I believe that the biggest failure among the average person is failure to pray in the Spirit.

#### **A. The Holy Spirit Helps with the Problem of Indifference**

Now, what does the Holy Spirit do? The Bible says that He helps our infirmities. May I list some of the infirmities? You may want to list them also and see if they’re not some

of your weaknesses. The first one is indifference—indifference. The reason that we don't pray is because of our spiritual lethargy—we just don't have any desire to pray; we're apathetic. Somebody said, "The biggest problem in America is apathy; but, who cares?" I mean, that's the problem with us—we just, somehow, can't get ourselves stirred up to pray.

Now, we find time to do what we really want to do. Some people say, "I just want to pray more; I don't know why I don't." Well, I'll tell you why you don't: You just lied when you said that you wanted to. We find time to do what we want to do, and the truth is that the old flesh has absolutely no appetite to pray. Did you know that? There is a part of me—I don't care about the fact that I've been preaching the gospel for 25 years, or about the fact that I've been a Christian for 30 years—there is a part of me that does not want to pray—that hates it. And, if you would be honest, there's a part of you that hates prayer; you don't want to pray.

The Bible says so and tells us why in this same eighth chapter of Romans; the Bible says: "*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*" (Romans 8:7). There is a part of us, that old carnal nature, that is at warfare with God—and quit trying to cover it up. Admit that the reason that you don't pray is that you don't want to pray. And, now that we've been honest, we can yield to the Holy Spirit and say, "Blessed Spirit of God, I don't want to—that old carnal nature doesn't want to—pray."

But, let me show you what the Holy Spirit does now. Look at the difference—look in Romans 8, verse 15: "*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*" (Romans 8:15). And, Galatians tells us, in Galatians 4, verse 6: "*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*" (Galatians 4:6).

Who is it in me that wants to pray? Not my old carnal nature, but the Holy Spirit in me. It's the Holy Spirit that wants to say, "Father, as deep answereth unto deep, and as long as I try to make my old carnal nature pray, I will never, never enjoy the place of prayer. It is not until I am so filled with the Holy Spirit that the Spirit of God cries in me, 'Abba, Father.'" You see, the first problem that we have in prayer is indifference—our apathy, our lack of concern—and the reason why we don't love the place of prayer more than we do, is that we're not praying in the Spirit; we're not filled with the Spirit.

## **B. The Holy Spirit Helps with the Problem of Ignorance**

Let me tell you another problem that you and I have in prayer—not only the problem of indifference, but also, the problem of ignorance. Look again, in Romans 8, verse 26—the Bible says: "*For we know not what we should pray for as we ought*" (Romans 8:26).

Now, I'm glad that Paul said *we* and not *you*, 'cause he included himself. And, the great Apostle Paul said, "There are times when I don't know what to pray for." Have you ever been that way? I mean, times when you just really don't know what to pray for.

You see, for example, here's an elderly person—let's suppose, here's a person who is very elderly—and they get sick. Now, should you pray that God would heal them? or should you pray that God would carry them home? For, the Bible says: "*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*" (Psalm 116:15). What should you pray? Sometimes, you don't know. Brewer, your dear preacher daddy—Suppose that he got real sick; it'd be hard for you to know. It surely would, because we don't know. But, aren't you glad that God knows? Aren't you glad that the Holy Spirit knows, you see?

And so, when you pray in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is able to direct your prayer and show you what to pray for. And then, you can think of the many things that you could pray for. Goodness sakes alive, folks! Think of all of the things that you could pray for. I mean, think of all of the people that you could pray for. Sometimes, when you get that prayer list on Wednesday night, isn't that a little bewildering to you, because you say, "Out of all of those people, which ones does the Lord really want me to pray for?" And, you think of all of the needs, and you think of all of the deacons—which one of these deacons should you pray for? All of them! You think of all of the staff; which ones should you pray for? All of the Sunday school teachers! Think of all of the evangelists; think of all of the missionaries; think of all of the causes; think of all of the politicians; and think of all that you could pray for. Now, if you're not careful, you'd be trying to pray for everything, and you'll get so bewildered that you'll pray for nothing. And, rather than your prayer becoming a river that runs through a channel, your prayer will become a stale swamp. And, for your prayer to be effective it must be elected.

### **C. The Holy Spirit Helps with the Problem of Inability**

Now, who's going to tell you what to pray for and how to pray when you decide what to pray for? The Holy Spirit Himself. Do you see how important it is that we pray in the Spirit—that we pray in the Spirit? But, not only do we have the problem of indifference, and not only do we have the problem of ignorance, we also have the problem of inability. I mean, folks, we get down to pray, and even when we want to, then we can't concentrate.

Do you ever go to sleep trying to pray? Sure, that one time. If you can't sleep, then try to pray, and the devil will put you to sleep. You know, you want to pray. The Bible says: "*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Matthew 26:41). And, we want to, but somehow, we just get lazy, our minds go into a stupor, we gather wool, and we drift in our thoughts. I wonder: Have you ever prayed and had all kinds of silly thoughts

come into your mind? Sure you have—be honest. You pray, you get drowsy, and you think about things that don't make much difference. Sometimes you have silly thoughts—you just don't have the ability, you don't have the energy.

I heard about a man who had an identity crisis and an energy problem, all at the same time. He didn't know who he was, and he was too tired to find out. I think that there are just some times when we just run out.

All right, look again, in Romans, chapter 8, and verse 11, as he talks about the Holy Spirit of God, and what the Holy Spirit of God does. In Romans, chapter 8, and in verse 11: *“But, if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you”* (Romans 8:11). Now, I don't think that this is referring to the Resurrection, although certainly, the Holy Spirit is involved with the Resurrection. I just believe that it's the Holy Spirit who anticipates what we do. He's the One who keeps us going. Oh, He's the One that enables us to preach and to witness, but bless God, He's the One who keeps us praying.

Why was it? You answer a question: Why was Jesus able to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, and yet, Peter, James and John were asleep? Was it that Jesus didn't need as much sleep? Do you think that's true? Do you think that He was some sort of a something, masquerading around here, that really wasn't a man, and that He didn't really get sleepy? No, He got sleepy; you'll find there that He fell asleep on the fantail of that boat, out there in the midst of the sea. Listen—He knew what it was to be weary. He knew what it was to stumble under that course. I'm so glad that He didn't go trouncing up Calvary with that cross on His shoulders. I'm so glad that He fell beneath the load—that showed that He was human, just like you and me, and that He got sleepy just like you and me.

But, why was it—why was it—that Jesus could pray in the Garden of Gethsemane and the disciples went to sleep? Jesus was praying in the Spirit, and Jesus pinpointed it. He said that the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41). And, if you pray in the flesh, then you're going to find that old inability; but, if you pray in the Spirit, then the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead will quicken your mortal body (Romans 8:11).

#### **D. The Holy Spirit Helps with the Problem of Interference**

Now, I'll tell you another problem that you'll have: Not only will you have the problem of indifference, not only will you have the problem of ignorance, not only will you have the problem of inability, but you will also have the problem of interference, for the devil doesn't want you to pray. And, brother, he will summon all of the artillery of Hell to keep

you from praying.

Turn to Ephesians, chapter 6, for a moment. In Ephesians, chapter 6 tells us how to overcome the devil. Look in verses 12 and 13: *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”* (Ephesians 6:12–13). Well, how are you going to do it? Skip down to verse 18: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 6:18)—praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

How are you going to overcome Satan’s interference? How are you going to rock the devil? Only by praying in the Spirit. You see, Satan will even encourage you to witness, and Satan will even encourage you to study the Bible, and, he will even encourage you to attend church, if you’ll make that a substitute for prayer. He does not want you to pray.

#### **E. The Holy Spirit Helps with the Problem of Inexpressibility**

And, how are you going to overcome his interference? Not by praying in the flesh. No Christian praying in the flesh is able to stand up against the devil—only as we pray “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18). Let me tell you another problem that we have in prayer: It’s the problem of inexpressibility—inexpressibility. We want to say things that we can’t say. We want to express thoughts that we cannot express. But, when you pray in the Spirit, you don’t always have to use just a certain word. You don’t always have to have such a vocabulary. God the Holy Spirit can take that prayer burden, and He can translate it and make it acceptable to the Lord. Look in Romans 8, verse 26, again: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Romans 8:26)—when there are just inexpressible burdens on our heart.

I heard of some people who were in a revival crusade in a church, and nothing was happening. Night after night, they met, and nothing seemed to be happening. There was a steely coldness over the service. Finally, they called on a farmer to pray, and this man was so burdened—he was so burdened, that he stood to pray, and he said, “O God,” and he choked up. And, he said, “O God, O God,” and that’s all the prayer he ever prayed. But, the power of God fell on that place. And, those in that meeting testify that it was from that moment that that man only articulated two words, that God came down, for the Spirit knew what was in his heart. Sometimes, there are things that are just inexpressible, and I’m so grateful that, when we pray in the Spirit, God the Holy Spirit

knows what we mean.

## **Conclusion**

Now, dear friend, what is the force of prayer? The force of prayer is this: that prayer can do anything God can do. What is the course of prayer? We must pray through Jesus Christ. But, what is the source of prayer? The source of prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire in our hearts, and sending it to Heaven in the power of the cross. Let us pray: Father in Heaven, teach us to pray in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# You Are Very Important to God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 5, 1978

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 19:1–10

*“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.”*

LUKE 19:5

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Zacchaeus Had an Orthodox Faith
- II. Zacchaeus Had an Experiential Faith
- III. Zacchaeus Had a Transforming Faith
  - A. God’s Grace Is Saving Grace
  - B. God’s Grace Is Sustaining Grace
  - C. God’s Grace Is Surviving Grace

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, please, and turn tonight to Luke chapter 19. I trust you brought your Bibles. You’ll always get so much more out of a message if you bring your Bibles and look along as we read and as we study. All right, Luke chapter 19, beginning in verse 1: *“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.”* Now the *publicans* were tax collectors, and they worked for the Roman government. And the Roman government had their amount that they needed, and they said to these tax collectors, “This is what you must give to us, and whatever over this you can collect is yours.” And so they became scoundrels indeed. Not only were they turncoats and traitors in the minds of the Jewish people; most of them were crooks. And it is doubtless that Zacchaeus was one of these crooks: *“chief among the publicans, and he was rich.”* *“And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man*

*that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:2–10)

You are very important to God. Let that sink into your hearts tonight. I’m not talking to your neighbor; I’m talking to you. You are very important to God. And that’s what this story tells us tonight. Now Zacchaeus doubtless thought that he was not very important to anybody except to himself, and his motto was, “Get all you can, and can all you can get; sit on the lid, and poison the rest.” He was out for number one. And he didn’t think anybody cared about him. But he was very interested in this man named Jesus. And since he was a little fellow, you know, we used to sing when I was in Sunday School, “Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he.” You remember that story.

Well, Zacchaeus was a very short little fellow, but he wanted to see Jesus. And so he went out ahead of the crowd because he could not see over the crowd, and climbed up into a sycamore tree. And incidentally, every time we go into the city of Jericho in a journey to the Holy Land, the guide is always quick to point out a sycamore tree and tell us it was that very same tree that Zacchaeus climbed. I doubt it very much. But anyway, Zacchaeus climbed up into a sycamore tree because he wanted to see the Lord. And then he was in for the surprise of his life, for as the Lord passed by, the Lord stopped, and He looked up into the tree, and He said, “*Zacchaeus...come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.*” (Luke 19:5)

And I’m certain that three thoughts jumped into the mind of Zacchaeus right away. Number one, “He sees me.” For the Bible says, he looked up into the tree. And then another thought followed hard on the heels of that: “He knows me—because he called my name.” Now Zacchaeus was dumbfounded that Jesus even thought twice, dumbfounded that Jesus knew him; but the third thing that staggered Zacchaeus was when Jesus said, “*I must abide at thy house.*” Not only does He see me; and not only does He know me—you get those three thoughts into your heart tonight, because they’re very true about you tonight; the Lord sees you tonight. O dear friend. He really sees you. He knows all about you. He sees you. He knows you—and I can guarantee you on the authority of the Word of God, He wants you.

And this is amazing that the Lord would feel this way about us tonight, because really, we’re just specks on a globe. That’s about the size of a grain of sand or less compared to the size of the universe. Really, it’s much less. When you think about it, there is no more reason that the Lord of glory should be interested in us than that President Carter should be interested in an ant floating on a piece of cheesecake in the

middle of the Atlantic Ocean. And yet our Lord looks down and He sees us as individuals.

Have you ever thought about the fact that He loves us one by one? He doesn't love us as a congregation; He loves us one by one. *"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."* (Matthew 10:30) You know that sun that stays up there in the sky and warms the earth and holds the planets in orbit will ripen a bunch of fruit like it has nothing else to do. And the great God that runs the universe is concerned about you as though that were His only task. Get these three thoughts in your heart, and get them down deep tonight: He knows you tonight. He sees you tonight. And He wants you tonight. There is no need to be out on a limb without Him. Zacchaeus was out on a limb; but, oh, thank God, Zacchaeus found Him, because He found Zacchaeus.

You know, it's so wonderful to know that He knows us, that He sees us, that He wants us. Don't you feel sorry for the atheist, the man who doesn't know the Lord? Why, he doesn't know where he came from; he doesn't know why he's here; he doesn't know where he's going. He's just situated between two nothings. He doesn't understand the past, he doesn't understand the future, and all He's looking forward to is a hole in the ground—that's all. I mean, that's death—just rotting, decaying. And embalming will help you a little bit just to get you through the funeral; but, friend, you're headed for rottenness and decay—that's it.

You know, if that were all I had to look forward to, I'd join the drinking crowd. I'd just get drunk and stay drunk, I believe—if that's all I had to forward to. No wonder people try to narcotize their mind; no wonder people drug themselves; no wonder people stay in a stupor—because life has no meaning. They're out on a limb without Him. They have no past; they don't know where they came from. They have no future. They believe that they are the accident of evolution. Nothing times nobody equals everything: that's what they believe. And since they believe that, they don't feel that they're really guilty for anything that they do. I mean, after all, they're just the sum total of their genes and chromosomes, and they are just the way nature formed them—or deformed them, whichever the case may be. And so they don't feel that they have any real responsibility for anything. They feel that they may be ill, but not evil. They may be sick, but not sinful. They have no responsibility.

And we see that a lot today. That is creeping into our education. That is creeping into our legislation. *You know, generally, when man thinks that he's an orphan of the ape, he ends up making a monkey out of himself every time.* I am delighted to know where I came from. I am delighted to know who I am. I am delighted to know where I'm going. I have a very personal God: One who sees me; One who knows me; and One, praise God, who wants me.

Now, how did Zacchaeus come to know the Lord? How was Zacchaeus

transformed? I want us to notice three things about his faith.

## I. Zacchaeus Had an Orthodox Faith

The first thing I want us to notice about his faith is this: It was an orthodox and intelligent faith. I want you to notice in verse 3 the Bible says, *“And he sought to see Jesus.”* (Luke 19:3) Now not just to see Jesus like you might want to see Elvis Presley or someone else, but he sought to see Jesus for who He was. Zacchaeus wanted the truth about this man Jesus: Who is Jesus Christ?

It’s not enough for you to have a passing relationship with Jesus. It’s not enough for you to have a glimpse of Jesus. It’s not enough for you to see Jesus unless you see in your seeing who Jesus Christ is. Who is Jesus Christ? He’s the One, ladies and gentlemen, who is the loftiest fact of the universe, and the central fact of the universe. He is the One who has split time BC and AD, and split my life to BC and AD. He’s the One who is the centerpiece of the human race. He is the One that you must understand before anything else makes sense. Who is Jesus Christ?

A little boy had a jigsaw puzzle that on one side had a map of the world and on the other side had a picture of a man. And his mother asked him to try and work it. And before long the little fellow had put the puzzle together, and he had the world all in one complete piece; the puzzle was done and every piece interlocked. And she didn’t know the little fellow knew that much about geography, and she said, “Son, how on earth did you do that?” “Oh,” he said, “I worked the other side first. When I got the man right, the world was right.”

Oh, let me tell you something, friend: You will never understand this world; you will never understand this universe, until you get the man right. I mean, the man Christ Jesus—until you understand Him. Zacchaeus had an intelligent faith. He saw Jesus, who He was; he made this discovery, that Jesus is Lord.

I want you to look in verse 8: *“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.”* (Luke 19:8) It took Zacchaeus but a little while to discover that Jesus Christ is Lord. Have you made that discovery? If I only had four words to speak, if I could say to the world just four words, I would say these four words: “Jesus Christ is Lord.” Have you discovered that—that Jesus Christ is Lord?

Now if I were to ask you tonight, “Do you believe in the lordship of Jesus Christ?” you would answer, “Yes.” But if I were to also ask you tonight, “Is Jesus Christ Lord of all that you are and all that you have?” I might get a very disturbing and revealing answer, if you answer truthfully. We often sing, Brother Whitmire, “Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.” That’s what Zacchaeus did. But I think that there are many who are here tonight who in light of the way that they are living nod their heads, and they acquiesce to the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord, but their lives tonight—

Dr. Vance Havner said, “Many of the people in our churches are baptized pagans, honoring Jesus with their lips; but their hearts are far from them.”

But it’s not enough for you just to say intellectually that Jesus Christ is Lord. Dear friend, you must say experientially, and in your life and in your practice, that Jesus Christ is Lord. He deserves to be the Lord of your life. The Bible says in Acts chapter 2, verse 36, that *“God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”* (Acts 2:36) God says that He is Lord, and there is no room for argument. Jesus Christ deserves to be Lord. The Bible says in Romans chapter 14, verse 9, *“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”* (Romans 14:9)

Is Jesus Christ your Lord? Really, is Jesus Christ your Lord? *Don’t get the idea that salvation is like a cafeteria line where you say, “I believe I’ll have a little savior-hood, please, but no lordship, thank you.” If Jesus Christ is not your Lord, Jesus Christ is not your Savior.* The Bible says, *“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Romans 10:9) Do you know what’s wrong with many of our churches? People have waltzed down the aisles, taken the pastor by the hand, joined the church, and gotten baptized, and have never yet made Jesus Christ Lord. Is Jesus Christ your Lord? Is He?

We hear a lot of talk today about taking Christ as your Savior, but that’s not biblical talk. Nowhere in the Bible do you read where it says, “Receive Christ as your Savior.” Now He is Savior, but you receive Christ, period. Now, what’s the difference?

Well, suppose I am performing a wedding ceremony, and there is a young man, young lady, here, and I say to the young man, “Would you take Mary to be your lawfully wedded wife?” Suppose he says, “Well, I’ll take Mary as housekeeper.” I say to her, “Would you take John to be your lawfully wedded husband?” “Well, I’ll take him as provider.” No. You see, you don’t take him as anything; you take him. You take her, and all that comes with her.

And I want to tell you, dear friend, one of the things that comes with Jesus is His lordship: you don’t just take Him as something. Now He happens to be Savior; He is indeed Savior; but somehow we have the idea that we can receive Jesus “as Savior.” No, the Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus—who He was—and Zacchaeus discovered that the Savior was also the Lord. What does it mean when Jesus Christ is Lord? It means our entire submission to Him. Have you turned everything over to Jesus Christ?

Lord Nelson, the British admiral, after a noted victory over the French, had the French admiral to come to surrender. And that French admiral came up with somewhat of a smirk on his face, his sword dangling by his side. And the French admiral appeared

on the deck of the British ship and he put out his hand toward Lord Nelson, but Lord Nelson did not put out his hand toward the French Admiral, but Lord Nelson said, “Your sword first, sir.”

And I want to tell you, dear friend, before we get the smile of Jesus Christ, and before we can place our hand in the hand of Jesus Christ, we must lay our sword of rebellion at His feet. He must be Lord. There must be an entire, complete submission. Is Jesus Christ your Lord? Have you submitted everything to Jesus Christ? Is there any area of your life that is unsubmitted to Jesus Christ? Is there? Will you say, “I still have the right to rule over this area”? To that degree, you have disgraced the name of the One you call Lord.

Not only does it mean your entire submission; it means His complete ownership of all that you have. Do you know a fallacy today? A fallacy is this: We believe that one-tenth of all that we have belongs to Jesus Christ. That’s a fallacy. My dear friend, everything you have belongs to Jesus Christ. I mean, all of it! Not one-tenth of your money; not one-seventh of your time—it all belongs to Jesus Christ! And if you are not honoring the Lord with a tenth, which is a token of your recognition that it all belongs to Jesus Christ, I doubt that you understand what it means when we talk about the lordship of Jesus Christ. And for many of us, simply to give a tenth and that’s all, is a disgrace, because we can rob God in offerings as well as tithes. (Malachi 3:8)

But, dear friend, when we give the tithe, and when we bring the offering, that does not mean that the remainder of the money is to be spent at our discretion. The remainder of the money is left under His leadership, as He directs. It all belongs to Him. And when I bring my money, and when you bring your money, on Sunday to this church and place it in the treasury of this church, it is representative of the fact that we are giving of ourselves, because that money represents our brain; it represents our blood; it represents our ability; it represents our sweat; it represents time. Money is personality that is put into coin. And if you don’t love God with your money, you don’t love God very much.

Oh, it’s easy to talk about the lordship of Christ; but when Zacchaeus found Jesus as Lord, it touched his pocketbook. You know, it’s easy to get all sentimental about Bible preaching. Sometimes people say, “Oh, I don’t want you to preach on money; just preach the Bible.” Well, let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: You can’t preach the Bible without preaching on money. Did you know that one out of every six verses in the four Gospels deals with man’s relationship to his material goods? Did you know of the parables Jesus taught, sixteen of the thirty-eight parables deal with our material relationships? Did you know that? Did you know that Jesus Christ had more to say about the use of material goods and the use of money than He had to say about heaven or hell, or both put together? Did you know that?

Oh, sometimes people want you to preach on the meaning of the third toe on the left foot of some beast in Revelation—and maybe the polish on that toe—but they don't want you to preach where it gets right down to where they live. But the lordship of Jesus Christ means, ladies and gentlemen, not only your complete submission, when you lay your sword at Jesus feet, but it means His total ownership of everything that you have. It means your unquestioned obedience.

Jesus said in Luke chapter 6, verse 46, *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 6:46) Whatever He tells you to do, whatever He saith unto you, do it. (John 2:5) That means your reason; that means your recreation; that means your tithe, your friends, your vacation, your marriage, the house you buy, the car you drive—all of it must be under His direction and His lordship. You have no right to your life. You are not your own; you are bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) And He can say, *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* I want you to notice this about Zacchaeus' faith: Zacchaeus had an orthodox faith; he sought to see Jesus, who He was, and he discovered that Jesus Christ is Lord.

## **II. Zacchaeus Had an Experiential Faith**

Now, the second thing I want you to notice about Zacchaeus' faith: Not only did Zacchaeus have an orthodox faith, but Zacchaeus had an experiential faith. Look, if you will again now; we'll take up our reading in verse 5, because we left off in verse 4: *“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.”* (Luke 19:5–6)

Now you're going to learn this about the Lord Jesus Christ: When a man has the Bible kind of faith, it is not simply propositional truth; it is relational truth. What I mean by that is this: Being a Christian is not just intellectually believing things about the Lord; it is receiving the Lord—experiential. Did you know there are a lot of people who believe right, who are going to hell, because they have never had the experience of receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior? There are some people who know the plan of salvation, and who believe the plan of salvation, who are lost, and who will be forever lost. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: *You are not saved by the plan of salvation; you are saved by the man of salvation—and His name is Jesus.* And you can be very orthodox and be very lost.

Zacchaeus had an orthodox faith. Give him 'A' for that. Zacchaeus knew that Jesus Christ was Lord. But he had a different kind of faith. Not only was it an orthodox faith; it was an experiential faith. Zacchaeus knew more than facts about Jesus; Jesus went home with Zacchaeus. And I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if you receive Him in this place tonight, He'll go home with you. And if He doesn't go home with you, I don't know

what kind of faith that you have, but you don't have the faith that saves. There are too many people who leave their Christ in the church on Sunday. He doesn't go home with them. They don't have an experiential faith. They come and sit in church and nod their heads, say *amen*, believe the facts; but I want you to know that *"the devils also believe, and tremble."* (James 2:19) The only difference is he has never had the experiential faith.

I told my pastor's class last Sunday about a man who stretched a tightrope over Niagara Falls and pushed a wheelbarrow balancing across the falls. Everybody was amazed. And then later on, he took three hundred pounds of cement in the wheelbarrow and pushed that across, bouncing. Everybody said, "Oh, that's marvelous, stupendous!" And then he asked the question, "How many of you believe I could do this with a man in the wheelbarrow?" Well, they had seen him do it with three hundred pounds of cement, and they put up their hands. He pointed to one man who had his hand up and said, "All right, you first: get in." Well, you couldn't see him for dust. He believed; but, you see, the kind of faith that Zacchaeus had, the kind of faith that doesn't leave you out on a limb without Him, is getting in the wheelbarrow with Jesus Christ. Bible faith does not mean head belief; it is experiential, relational, not merely propositional truth. Have you experienced Jesus Christ? Has Jesus Christ gone home with you?

There was a difference between Christopher Columbus and the rest of his contemporaries, but that difference was not primarily in the fact that Christopher Columbus thought that the earth was round. It may surprise you to know that many of the leading universities in the time of Christopher Columbus were teaching that the earth might indeed be round. The difference between Christopher Columbus and the rest of his contemporaries was this: he was willing to set sail on the basis of his faith—and that's what made him different.

I want to tell you, it's not enough for you to sit here and say, "Jesus Christ is Lord." Are you willing to act upon your belief? Zacchaeus was, and it transformed his life. You need to know more than about Jesus; you need to know Jesus.

Years ago, Joyce gave me a little card to carry in my billfold. It was all about Joyce, and it told about her dress size, her shoe size, her glove size, and all of those things. That was nice to have, but I tell you what: When I would get off in a revival meeting somewhere and get awfully lonesome, that card wasn't much company—not much company at all. Oh, it's one thing to have the facts about Jesus; it's another thing to have Jesus. Do you know Jesus?

### **III. Zacchaeus Had a Transforming Faith**

Zacchaeus had an orthodox faith, but Zacchaeus had an experiential faith. And the third thing I want you to notice about Zacchaeus: Because he had an orthodox faith, and

because he had an experiential faith, he had a transforming faith. Begin now as we take up our reading in verse 8: *“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:8–10)

Now when you find a man like Zacchaeus who starts talking about giving away his goals, you perk up your ears, because something has happened to Zacchaeus. I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, this doesn't sound like Zacchaeus; it sounds like Jesus: *“The half of my goods I give to the poor.”* That doesn't sound like Zacchaeus. Something has happened to Zacchaeus, because Zacchaeus's orthodoxy, and Zacchaeus's experiences, had turned to a transformation; his life was changed. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* (2 Corinthians 5:17) No longer is Zacchaeus a money-grabbing, penny-pinching, dishonest, crooked skinflint; he has been transformed by the grace of God.

#### **A. God's Grace Is Saving Grace**

Oh, do you know the grace of God? It's saving grace. Zacchaeus was saved not from hell; he was saved from his sin. There are so many people who think that Jesus Christ came to save us from hell. That isn't what the Bible says. The Bible says, *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21) What right do we have to claim that we're saved if Jesus Christ is not delivering us from our sin? Zacchaeus was transformed.

Has there been a change in your life? You say, “Well, I was a pretty good man before I met Him.” Well, it will make a bad man good, and a good man better. And you'll know the difference. Jesus will know the difference. And your wife certainly will. It will transform you—saving grace. Zacchaeus was freed from greed, from dishonesty.

I don't know what your problem is; but when Jesus Christ comes into your life, He's going to change you. Your problem may not be greed like Zacchaeus. Your problem may be drugs. It may be alcohol. It may be lust. It may be perversion. It may be fear. It may be doubt. It may be self-pity. You may be a slave to public opinion. It may be unbelief. But I want to tell you that Jesus Christ, who set Zacchaeus free; Jesus Christ, who set Adrian Rogers free, is the Jesus Christ who will set you free. It is saving grace.

#### **B. God's Grace Is Sustaining Grace**

Oh, Zacchaeus had been working all this time for financial freedom. And the more freedom he sought, the deeper he became a slave, until Jesus Christ set him free, because in the Bible *freedom is not the privilege to do what you want; it is the power*

*to do what you ought.* And Jesus Christ gave Zacchaeus this freedom. It was saving grace. And because it was saving grace, ladies and gentlemen, it was sustaining grace.

Do you know that the Lord began to abide with Zacchaeus? And the scripture that tells that He went home with Zacchaeus is only illustrative of the fact that Jesus Christ abides within our hearts. You see, Zacchaeus was lonely: he needed a friend. He was hated; he was an outcast. And Jesus came into his heart to abide, to be with him forever.

Charles Wesley, the founder of Methodism, one time was walking through the woods on a stormy day, when a cloudburst and lightning storm just broke out, and the rain began to come down in torrents. Wesley was by a swollen stream, and the little birds up in the tree were just shivering on the limb. And a bolt of lightning flashed, and the little bird was so frightened that it flew out of the tree, flew down toward Charles Wesley, and it tried to hide in his coat. And the little bird went right into his bosom, right under his coat. Charles Wesley was so moved by that scene that he wrote a song that we often sing:

*Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last.*

CHARLES WESLEY

And that's what our Lord does. He hides us, dear friend. He sustains us. He keeps us.

*Hiding in Thee, hiding in Thee,  
Thou blest "Rock of Ages,"  
I'm hiding in thee.*

WILLIAM O. CUSHING

### **C. God's Grace Is Surviving Grace**

But the grace that Zacchaeus discovered, not only was it saving grace, and sustaining grace; it was surviving grace. Oh, I know that the Lord kept this little ol' skinflint. I suspect one day to see Zacchaeus in heaven, don't you? Won't that be an experience when we sit down and talk to ol' Zack and say, "Tell us how it was when you climbed up that tree, and then the Lord invited you home"? Oh, dear friend, it's so wonderful to experience the grace of God. Have you experienced the grace of God? Oh, He'll save you, He'll sustain you, and He will keep you—for it is surviving grace.

I want to tell you about another man who walked the Seine River in Paris. He was miserable, rejected. He wanted to end his life. He went to the Seine River four times to throw himself in and drown himself. But he couldn't get the courage. Three times he put poison to his lips to drink it down, but he could not find the courage. Twice he took a

pistol, cocked the trigger, put it to the temple of his head, but did not have the nerve to pull the trigger. And then one day someone told this man about Jesus Christ. And William Cowper wrote these words:

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

WILLIAM COWPER

Oh, thank God for the grace of God that saved Zacchaeus, that saved William Cowper, that saved Adrian Rogers, that wants to save you! Have you experienced that grace?

## **Conclusion**

Friend, let me tell you something: If you are out on a limb without Him, one of these days the devil is going to cut that limb off from behind you, and then you're going to find yourself under the sod without God—lost, lost, lost, lost, forever lost! If I were not a Christian, if I knew not the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I would not go without Jesus Christ for twenty-four hours for one million dollars. If you were to stack a million dollars on this pulpit and say, "All you have to do is postpone your salvation for twenty-four hours and earn one million dollars," if I know my heart, and God in heaven, here is what I say: I would not go without Jesus Christ for twenty-four hours for one million dollars, or any sum you may name, for I may die in that twenty-four hours. Besides that, I wouldn't sell my Lord for twenty-four hours for a million dollars; I wouldn't do it. And yet there are some of you here tonight who are Christians, and you're saying, "One of these days, I'll do it." Well, I want to tell you, the greatest discovery you can ever make is this: He sees you. He knows you. He wants you.

# Time Out for Tears

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 8, 1990

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 19:37–46

*“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.”*

LUKE 19:41

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Wept over Superficial Religion
- II. Jesus Wept over Passing Opportunity
- III. Jesus Wept over Smoldering Judgment

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Luke chapter 19. The story that I’m going to read to you about is a true story, an episode in the life of the Lord Jesus that took place on the day that we call Palm Sunday. That is the day that Christian churches are recognizing and celebrating today. And you will remember this morning in the beautiful musical vignette and drama as the Lord Jesus was pictured coming in, the children and the people were waving palm branches. I want to give you that episode tonight from the Word of God, and I’ve chosen to put an interlude in our series of messages on contemporary challenges to the cross. In Luke chapter 19 now and verse 37, the Bible says, *“And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives...”*—so the Lord Jesus is coming from the east. He’s going toward the city of Jerusalem. He has come up from Bethany. And He’s right at the crest of the Mount of Olives. I’ve been at this spot many times, and I have it in my mind’s eye right now—*“And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.”* (Luke 19:37–41)

He was about halfway down the Mount of Olives now. There’s a beautiful place

there. Today, a small chapel is built there. It's called *Dominus Flevit*, or "The Tears of Jesus." And I have never been to the Holy Land but what I have stopped there, opened my Bible, looked out at the city of Jerusalem, looked past over the Garden of Gethsemane, the brook Kidron, looked up to the Temple Mount, and imagined my Lord weeping at this place. The Bible says that the Lord Jesus here is weeping. And the word for weeping here doesn't mean just ordinary weeping. It means that He wept out loud. He is convulsed. He is broken. Great tears are coursing down the cheeks of the Son of God. His frame is heaving, and loud groans and sobs are coming out of His heart, and He is weeping over the city, saying, *"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."* (Luke 19:42–44)

Now, my dear friend, may I tell you that the Christian life is to be a life of joy, unspeakable joy, *"joy unspeakable and full of glory."* (1 Peter 1:8) The Bible says we are to rejoice in the Lord always. (Philippians 4:4) And someone has aptly said that joy is the flag that is flown from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence. And I believe that the average church suffers from a saddening lack of old-fashioned, simple-hearted, overflowing joy. And I believe one of the greatest advertisements that we have as a church is not what we put in the newspaper, but the joy of our people when you go to work on Monday morning, and the joy of our worship when we come to worship on Sunday night.

Now if you're not a joyful Christian, I don't believe you're a good testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. And when we come to church on Sunday, we don't come to mourn a defeat; we come to celebrate a victory. And I want us to have that kind of joy. Now I'm not talking about cheap thrills. Sin has its thrills, but it doesn't have its joys. Those who live in sin, when you analyze them, are the saddest people on the face of the earth.

But now, let me tell you something: Not only was Jesus a man of joy, but Jesus was also a man of sorrows. Jesus was a man of tears. Three times in the Bible it is recorded that Jesus wept. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. (John 11:35) Those were tears of sympathy. And if you've been to the graveside and wept, it's all right: you're like your Lord. And when you weep, I want to tell you that Jesus weeps with you. When you hurt, He is hurt. He is touched with the feeling of your infirmities. (Hebrews 4:15) Jesus wept tears of sympathy. When He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He wept tears of agony. He prayed, and in agony of spirit the perspiration became as drops of blood and He wept. (Luke 22:45) And the Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews *"with strong crying and tears"* He cried out to God. (Hebrews 5:7) And you see Him there at the rock of the

agony. Jesus wept tears of sympathy. Jesus wept tears of agony. But at this time He is weeping tears of urgency. Jesus looks down at the city of Jerusalem and He knows what is coming for the city of Jerusalem, and His great heart is broken, and Jesus weeps.

Now, why am I preaching this message tonight? By the way, the title of the message is “Time Out for Tears.” I’ll tell you why: because, my dear friend, what breaks the heart of Jesus ought to break your heart. Whatever moves the heart of the Savior ought to move your heart.

Now, let me give you the background here. The Lord Jesus, this is the week before His crucifixion. He’s coming into Jerusalem in what some call a triumphal entry. Some see Him coming as a king, but our Lord Jesus, humble as He was, came on a borrowed donkey, the symbol of humility. When Caesar came into Rome, Julius Caesar, when he was pulled into Rome in his triumphal entry into Rome, he came in a beautiful carriage pulled by forty elephants. And Marc Anthony, when he read about what happened to Julius Caesar, when Marc Anthony came into Rome, he came into Rome with a chariot pulled by magnificent lions. But Jesus comes riding upon a donkey in fulfillment of prophecy. And just as He comes over the crest of that hill and He sees that city, Jerusalem the Golden—if you’ve never seen Jerusalem in the morning, you see the sun as it comes over the Mount of Olives, and there on that city you see the limestone as it is bathed in the golden sun, and you can understand why its called Jerusalem the Golden—but when Jesus saw the city, again, the Bible says He was convulsed with anguish and tears of urgency.

Why did Jesus weep over Jerusalem? The same reason we ought to weep over Memphis. Let me give you three reasons—and it’s right here in the Bible—why Jesus wept, and why I ought to weep, and indeed why I do weep.

## **I. Jesus Wept over Superficial Religion**

First of all, Jesus wept over their superficial religion. Look, if you will, in verses 37 and following here. The Bible says, *“And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.”* (Luke 19:37–38) Sounds like they had some kind of a camp meeting to me. Oh boy, sounds like a great religious service to me. I mean, dear friend, if you want enthusiasm, that would be enthusiasm. They had religion, but it was all superficial.

Let me tell you, that same crowd that was casting their garments in His way; that same crowd that was waving the palm branches; that same crowd that was saying, *“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”*; (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9) that

same crowd that was saying, “Hail Him! Hail Him!” in one week would be saying, “Nail Him! Nail Him! Let Him be crucified!” (Mark 15:13–14; Luke 23:21; John 19:6) The same people! I mean, they were going to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

And what was Passover all about? Passover was all about the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God. Passover is a picture, a prophecy, a portrait of Jesus. The Apostle Paul says, “*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*” (1 Corinthians 5:7) The whole week was about Him. And yet He would be judged, spit upon, beat, rejected, neglected, and crucified. We see what Jesus said right after He came into the temple on this same day if you’ll look down in verses 45 and 46: “*And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.*” (Luke 19:45–46) Jesus saw their religion. Jesus saw their ceremonies. Jesus heard their praise. But Jesus knew that it was all superficial, not supernatural, and it causes Him to weep.

Did you know that Memphis is a city of churches, but, God forgive and God forbid, so much of the religion in this city is absolutely superficial? The Lord Jesus warned about it in Matthew chapter 7, verses 22 and 23. He mentions the judgment. And at the final judgment He said, “*Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*” (Matthew 7:22–23) It’s not that they had salvation and lost it. They had religion, but they didn’t have the Lord.

As I preached this morning, most of the people in America don’t need religion; they need Jesus Christ. I want you to see how they had false praying: they said, “Lord, Lord.” They had false prophesying: they prophesied in His name. They had false power: they cast out devils in His name. They had false performance: they did many mighty works. They sang in the choir. They sat on the platform. They took up the offering. They gave. They did all of these things. They taught in Sunday School—or the counterpart of it. But Jesus said, “I never knew you.” But notice what else He said: “*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*”

Now, my dear friend, religion without Jesus is not only useless; it is iniquitous. He calls it iniquity. He calls it sin. And Jesus, if He were to come to this city, He would weep over their religion without reality, over superficial religion. And I want you to examine your heart, because Jesus said, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

And as surely as I’m sitting here tonight, there are some of you who are baptized pagans. You give your tithe. You sing in the choir. But you have never met Jesus. The Bible says, “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.*” (2 Corinthians 13:5) And Jesus would look down at a congregation like this one, and many congregations across

America, and I believe great salty tears would course down His cheeks.

## II. Jesus Wept over Passing Opportunity

I'll tell you another thing that broke the heart of the Lord Jesus there that day: Not only did superficial religion break His heart, but Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of the opportunity that was passing. This was a day of golden opportunity for them. Never ever had they as a people had a greater opportunity than was theirs that day. Begin in verse 42. Here's why Jesus is weeping. Notice while He's weeping He's saying this: *"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day,"*—in other words, "You should have known it all the time, but in this day if you'd only known—*"the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."* (Luke 19:42)

Oh, what an opportunity! There was the King of kings. There was the Lord Jesus Christ coming into their city wanting to bless them. What a day of opportunity was theirs! But they missed it. Why did Jesus Christ say, *"This thy day"*? Well, you see, that day had been prophesied for over four hundred years. If you were to read the ninth chapter of Daniel, you would find one of the most remarkable prophecies in all of the Bible. In the ninth chapter of Daniel, Daniel prophesied that the Messiah was to come in 483 years from a particular date. And that particular date was from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem. The command to restore and build Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes the king on May 14, 445 BC. Now the Bible teaches, therefore, that in 483 years—and a biblical year of prophecy is 360 days; if you extrapolate that out and multiply that, in 173,880 days—Messiah would come.

Now, my dear friend, historians and Bible scholars have worked this out, and they have studied the calendars, and they have calculated, and they can tell you that Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was on April 6, 32 AD, exactly, minutely, to the day that the prophet Daniel had prophesied. When Messiah the prince would come—483 years—it was prophesied. You say, "Well, they didn't know." They should have known. They could have known. They ought to have known. But they did not understand because they were blind. Now in a moment He's going to talk to them about judgment. But before God sends judgment, God always sends opportunity. But opportunity passed by causes God to weep.

In Jeremiah's day, Jeremiah saw judgment coming like the Lord Jesus saw judgment coming. And Jeremiah had preached to the people of Judah. And the people of Judah had been warned again and again by the prophet of God to repent, or judgment would come. But they would not listen to Jeremiah the prophet, the weeping prophet, who wept like his Lord. Then the Babylonians came. And the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem. And they put their armies round about the walls of Jerusalem and cut the people off from the ripening fields of grain. The harvest was out there. It was

summertime, and the harvest was there, but nobody could go out of the city, because they just simply sealed the city off. They called that “laying siege” to a city. And then finally, Jeremiah the prophet stood up, and his words are recorded in Jeremiah 8:20. With tears coursing down his cheeks, the weeping prophet said, “*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*” (Jeremiah 8:20) That is, “There was a time, but now it is too late.” Starvation stalked the city. The Bible tells us that mothers cooked and ate their own children and starvation was so severe.

Every time before judgment, God offers mercy. Before there is judgment, God gives a time of harvest. But if men will not take that harvest, as we’re going to see, judgment comes. In Noah’s time, God didn’t just send the flood; God gave the people of Noah’s time 120 years. And Noah, the man of God, preached with the ring of hammers in the foreground, the wrath of God in the background, and Noah preached and pled and said “repent” for 120 years. But then, harvest passed, and judgment came.

My dear friend, the harvest time is here for America. The harvest time is here for our church. But harvest does not last forever. Opportunity passes. The harvest of youth passes. If I had small children in my home—I’m talking about old enough to know the difference between right and wrong—I would do all that I could do to lead those children to Jesus as children. I would not wait till they’re teenagers. I would bring them to Jesus. C. Wade Freeman, who recently went to heaven just a few weeks ago, was the Director of Evangelism for the Texas Baptist Convention. He did a survey. He received over ten thousand replies of Baptists and people who had been saved, and he asked, “How many of you were saved after you were twenty?” Out of ten thousand, only eight percent were saved after twenty. Practically all of them had been saved before twenty. Statisticians tell us that more than half of all of the people who are saved are saved before they’re fifteen.

Parents had better wake up. Sometimes parents say, “Well, I don’t believe in pressuring little children.” Well, I don’t believe in pressuring little children, either. But I do believe in encouraging little children to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And sometimes we fail to reach our children, and then when the boy is fifteen, sixteen, on drugs, rebellious, they come to the pastor, they come to the youth director, and they say, “Won’t you do something about our son? We can’t do anything with him.” Lead him to Jesus when he’s a child. And I don’t mean just get him baptized. I mean, lead him to Jesus. Get him Spirit-filled. Help him to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. You say, “Well, he’s not old enough.” My dear friend, a ten-year-old child, according to physiologists, knows half of all he’ll ever learn in his lifetime—when he’s ten! When he’s old enough to know that he’s a sinner and that his sin is against God, he is old enough to be saved.

I’m telling you, dear friend, that Jesus weeps over passing opportunity—not only the

opportunity of youth, but the opportunity of Holy Spirit conviction. Last Sunday morning I talked about neglect, procrastination. Would to God that we could understand that when we procrastinate the Holy Spirit may be so grieved and so wounded that He no longer strives! The Bible says in Genesis 6:3, God speaking, *“My spirit shall not always strive with man.”* (Genesis 6:3) The Bible says in Isaiah 55:6, *“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”* (Isaiah 55:6) The harvest of life itself is passing away. This may be the last service you’ll ever be in. The fact of death is certain. The time of death is uncertain. The only thing that could interdict death is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And if you’re lost, that, my dear friend, will be the same as death for you. What I mean by that is it will end your chance to be saved.

### **III. Jesus Wept over Smoldering Judgment**

And so I’m telling you that Jesus looked down at the city of Jerusalem and Jesus wept. Jesus wept—why? Because of superficial religion. Jesus wept—why? Because of passing opportunity. But let me give the third reason that Jesus wept on Palm Sunday. And I’m just as certain as I’m standing here that if the Lord Jesus were here looking over this city of churches called Memphis, Tennessee, on this Palm Sunday today, physically, Jesus would be weeping for these three reasons: superficial religion, passing opportunity; and, last of all, smoldering judgment—judgment that was right around the corner. Notice what Jesus said in verse 43: *“For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee.”* (Luke 19:43–44)

Now, never did Rome have more control. Never did things seem to be smoother than they were in the time of Jesus, the *Pax Romana*, the peace of Rome. But Jesus with His omniscience, and Jesus with His prophetic mind, looked forward just thirty-five years, and Jesus knew what was going to happen. Titus the Roman general laid siege on Jerusalem in 70 AD. Thirty-five years about from the time when Jesus made this statement, one of the bloodiest orgies of all time took place. The Romans surrounded Jerusalem. They laid siege to the city. Starvation stalked the streets. And then it began. They breached the walls of Jerusalem. They came in. They made crosses to crucify Jews on until they ran out of trees to make crosses out of. They laid the city waste. They destroyed the temples, the buildings; not one stone left upon another of that magnificent temple. Then in their fury, because the Jews would not surrender as they should, they did what conquerors of that time would do. They sowed the city with salt and ploughed it in so nothing would grow. They decimated the city. These people that day, that Palm Sunday, who were leaping and dancing and saying, ‘Hosanna! Hosanna! Peace! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,’ Jesus knew that in thirty-

five years one million of them would be slain. Others of them would go through unmentionable horror and sorrow. And Jesus knew that many of them not only would die in Jerusalem, but would die and go to hell, and Jesus wept.

Can you read the newspapers? Can you not tell the signs of the time? Can you not tell the urgency and the emergency of these days in which we live? But we come and sit in a sanctuary like this on Sunday night, and it seems like the world is this way. But, friend, the world is not this way. This is a wicked world. I cannot even describe the things I've been reading about the pornography and the filth and the debauchery and the wickedness and the God-hate that is in our world. And America is ripe for judgment. And God is going to judge America. But our generation is blind to danger, deaf to God, and sure for judgment. And Jesus weeps over America. And judgment may be very close for us tonight, much closer than we realize. And I believe that if Jesus were to stand in this pulpit tonight, He may indeed just weep and say, "O Memphis, you are a city of superficial religion! O Memphis, you are a city of wasted opportunity! O Memphis, you are a city of coming judgment!"

## Conclusion

Now, my dear friend, what caused Jesus to weep ought to cause us to weep. There ought to be a time out for tears. As I said, I believe in joy. I believe in fun. But listen to this; those of you who are not soul winners, listen to this—Psalm 126:6: *"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."* (Psalm 126:6) Does what breaks the heart of Jesus break your heart? When is the last time you shed a tear over some soul that was mortgaged to the devil? The Apostle Paul said in Acts 20:31, *"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I cease not to warn every one night and day with tears."* (Acts 20:31) Do you know what's missing in the average church, and, God help us, in this church? Tears! Tears! I'm not talking about crocodile tears. I am talking about tears.

General Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army. He was a great man. One of the leaders, the superintendents, in the Salvation Army wrote General Booth and said, "You've got to help us here." And this particular division of the Salvation Army said, "We are praying; we're teaching; we're witnessing; but we're not having revival. We're doing everything we know to do, but we're not having revival. What should we do?" They wrote the old general. He sent back a telegram—just two words: "Try tears."

Charles Grandison Finney used to say, "We'll never have revival until Mr. Amen and Mr. Wet Eyes are back in the pew." Do you know what happens around here on Sunday morning, Sunday night? I can prepare a sermon; I can soak myself in prayer; I can come out and tear my heart out preaching the Word of God, and there will be some who

have their names on this church roll who think, “Going to sing another stanza, huh? Oh, we may be a little late getting home.” Souls are in the balance. My dear friend, we ought to be singing and praying with urgency and tears and fervency. Do you believe that souls are lost? Do you believe that your neighbor if he dies will go to hell without the Lord Jesus Christ? Or do you think this is all a game; this is just a club that we belong to; this is just a charade? One day when they’re dropping those clods on the casket of your friend, neighbor, loved one, father, mother, brother, or sister, it will be too late for tears.

How do you get broken heart? Well, you can’t work it up. The only way I know to have a broken heart is to have the Spirit of Jesus in you, to yield to the Holy Spirit of God until He helps you to see this world and see this city as Jesus saw Jerusalem. And what broke the heart of Jesus ought to break ours. Imagine what it would be like to have your mother, your father, your son, your daughter to burn in the fires of hell forever. If that doesn’t break your heart, then see Jesus writhing on that cross dying for you and for me.

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, hear your pastor. The Christian life is one of joy, but we need to take time out for tears and to weep before our God while we can. If God ever gave a church an opportunity, He’s giving us one today. This is our day. Let’s not miss it.

# Time Out for Tears

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 18, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 19:37–48**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Wept Because of Their Superficial Religion
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## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn, if you would, please, to the Gospel of Luke chapter 19. I'm going to ask you to watch something in just a moment. And what you're going to see I pray will touch your heart, because I'm going to be speaking to you on this subject, "Time Out for Tears." God knows that we have enough to weep about in America today.

You know, the Christian life is a life of abounding joy. Somebody said a long time ago that, "Joy is the flag that is flown from the castle of the heart when the king is in residence." And we're to rejoice in the Lord always. Sometimes, when we come to church, I don't think there's enough joy. Sometimes we come to the services like we've come to mourn a corpse rather than to hail a victor whose name is the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin may have its thrills, but sin does not have its joy. Joy is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to say at the outset of this message that I believe in a life of joy.

However, the Christian life also is to be a life of tears. It's to be a life of a broken heart. Solomon wrote in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "There's a time to laugh and there's a time to weep." And I believe that we in America need to be weeping and keeping with the urgency and emergency of this day and this hour.

Now, I want you to look at a passage of Scripture: Luke chapter 19, beginning in verse 37. It's an episode in the life of the Lord Jesus. Jesus is facing His last week on this earth before He is crucified.

"And when he was come nigh—verse 37—when he was come now, nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen,

saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered, and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes, for the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests, and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him, and could not find what they might do; for the people were all very attentive to hear him.”

Jesus was a man of abounding joy, and yet He was a man also of tears. You find Jesus in the Bible weeping. He wept at the grave of Lazarus. Those were tears of sympathy. He wept in the Garden of Gethsemane. Those were tears of agony. And He wept on the Mount of Olives. Those were tears of urgency. And I’m telling you that we, as His followers, need to be sharing tears of sympathy and, and we need to be sharing tears of agony, and we need to be sharing and shedding tears of urgency because of the day in which we are living.

Now, let me give you background of this passage of Scripture. Jesus is coming for that last week into Jerusalem. If you’ve been to Israel, you know that, just east of the City of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives. And Jesus is coming over the brow of the Mount of Olives, and He’s taking a path that we call the Palm Sunday Road, and He’s going down the Mount of Olives. About half way down the Mount of Olives, while the people are shouting and praising and saying, “Glory to God, hallelujah, amen,” Jesus stops at a place. I like to visit this place when I go to Israel. We stopped there, we taught, we prayed because it was there that Jesus began to weep. He began to sob. And the word in the Greek language means, actually, that He wept openly, convulsively, heaving in sorrow, great salty tears rolling down the cheeks of the very Son of God, weeping over Jerusalem.

Why did Jesus weep? May I suggest to you three things that caused Him to weep. And what caused Jesus to weep ought to cause Adrian to weep and to cause you to weep. Again, I believe in joy, but I believe we need to take time out for tears.

## I. Jesus Wept Because of Their Superficial Religion

First of all, Jesus wept because of their superficial religion. Superficial religion. Notice, if you will, in this passage of Scripture here in Luke chapter 19. Look, if you will, in verse 37: “And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.” Had you been there, you would have said, “Hey, it is revival time in Jerusalem!” These people are praising God. They are leaping and they are dancing, saying, “Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” Why, they’re having a wonderful time praising the Lord. But as we’re going to see, it was all superficial.

They were very religious people. They were saying, as Jesus was riding there upon that donkey, “Hail Him, hail Him.” And in a few days, the same crowd would be saying, “Nail Him. Crucify Him.” Jesus, as He stopped there, looked down upon that temple. Josephus, a historian, said that that temple, that magnificent temple, stood there on the temple mount like a mountain of snow. As the sun would come over the brow of the Mount of Olives and shine down there upon that temple, sitting there upon what is Mount Moriah, it was a breathtaking sight. It was, indeed, the house of God, but it had become a den of thieves. No wonder Jesus wept.

Look in verse 45: “And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” Superficial religion. That week, when Jesus Christ was going into Jerusalem, was the Passover week. It was a week when they would kill the Passover lamb. The sad thing, the tragic thing is that Jesus Christ Himself was that Passover Lamb, and they did not know it. They did not recognize Him. To them it was a religious ceremony, and they went through the ceremony, but they absolutely missed the meaning and hung Him on a cross.

Jesus weeps over people who have superficial religion. He warned about this in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 22. He talked about the final judgment of those who have a superficiality in the things of God. And Jesus said these words, startling words, “Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, depart from me—now listen to this—ye that work iniquity. I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Do you know what He called their false praying when they said, “Lord, Lord?” Do you know what He called their false preaching when they prophesied in His name? Do you know what He called their false power when they said they cast out demons? Do you know what He called their port, false performance when he said, “We’ve done many

wonderful works?” He called it iniquitous. Not merely useless, but iniquitous.

Do you know what Jesus would weep over in America today? Superficial religion. Superficial religion. Most people in America do not need religion. They need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. It was a super, it, it was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus.

Down in Bogota you’ve got plenty of religion, but people need a vital relationship with the Son of God.

Our city, Memphis, Tennessee, is filled with religion. And as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, may God help us to weep over this our city.

We’re talking about sending missionaries to Latin America, to Central America, around the world. Folks, God has put us in the middle of a mission field right here in this city. And may the things that break the heart of the Son of God, may they break my heart and your heart. It’s time for tears! Jesus wept over their superficial religion.

## **II. Jesus Wept Because of Their Passing Opportunity**

I’ll tell you what else Jesus wept over. Not only did Jesus weep over their superficial religion, but Jesus wept because of their passing opportunity. Look now in verses 42 and following. Jesus wept over the city, verse 41, saying, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes, for the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast up a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because—underscore it now—because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” He said, “If you only knew. If you only knew the opportunity that you have right now.” This was a great day of opportunity, but they were blind to it. They were deaf to it. They did not know. They should have known.

God gave a magnificent prophecy in Daniel 9. It’s one of the great prophecies of the Bible. And I believe it ties in with what Jesus is saying, “this thy day.” In Daniel chapter 9, and it’s a very convoluted prophecy, but a wonderful one to study,

God says that there’s going to be 483 years for Messiah to come after a point in the calendar. That point in the calendar was when a command was given to rebuild and restore Jerusalem. That command was given by Artaxerxes, the king, on March 14, 445 B.C. Now, from the time that Artaxerxes the king gave that command until the day that Jesus Christ came into Jerusalem riding upon that donkey—if you add up those days, they would be 173,880 days. And Jesus on the day was riding into Jerusalem, April 6, 32 A.D. in an exact, precise fulfillment of prophecy. And so, Jesus could say to them, “If you knew the things that belong to your peace on this thy day.” It was their day and they missed it. It was harvest time. The Son of God was there, and they were blind to

blessing and deaf to danger.

You see, God has harvest times, but harvest times pass. Harvest times don't last forever. Jeremiah, in another day, the weeping prophet, who wept like Jesus wept, Jeremiah had warned his people about God's judgment that was coming. But the good times were rolling. Had they had a Dow Jones, it would have been up in the high numbers. And nobody listened to Jeremiah, that weeping prophet, that howling prophet. They laughed him to scorn. But the day came when the Babylonian army surrounded Jerusalem and cut off the people from their fields of ripening food, and laid siege to the City of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day. Starvation so stalked the city that the records tell us that mothers killed and cooked and ate their own children. When Jeremiah saw the harvest in the fields rotting and people on the inside of the city starving, he said in Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 20: "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we're not saved." It's too late now. There was a time. There was an opportunity. There was an harvest. Days of harvest don't last forever. The Bible teaches when a harvest is neglected, it passes away and then judgment comes. Think about it.

In Noah's time there was a day of harvest. There was a harvest time. Noah, God's preacher, preached for 120 years when the ark was preparing with the ring of hammers in the background and the wrath of God in the foreground. And he preached, and the doors of mercy were wide open, but people did not come. And, finally, the dam of God's mercy gave way to the raging waters of God's wrath. The harvest time was passed. There's a time when harvest passes.

This generation. We have more opportunity, more opportunity than any generation ever had, more ability to preach, more tools, but we have a generation that is letting this harvest pass. I marvel at the patience that God has had with God-blessed America. I marvel. I marvel that the wrath of God has not yet descended upon America, and I wonder when it is going to happen and how quickly it will happen.

You see, harvest passes. The harvest of youth passes. If you're a young person, and our young people are really out in a, other services tonight. They're not in here. But the harvest time of youth passes. Ecclesiastes 12 and verse 1 says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." We need to get teenagers saved. We need to get boys and girls saved.

Wade Freeman, who used to be the evangelism director for the Southern Baptists of the State of Texas, did a survey. And from 10,000 replies, he asked this question: At what age were you saved? Only 8% of 10,000 respondents, only 8% were saved after the age of 20. Only 8%. Did you know that more than half of people who are ever saved, more than half are saved before they're 15. We need to get boys and girls

saved. Parents need to wake up! They let their boys and girls go through life without leading them to Jesus Christ. And then when that boy is on drugs, or arrested, a criminal or a drunkard, then they say, “What are we going to do about him?” The time to get that child saved is when that child is a child. Opportunity passes. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...”

I’ll tell you something else. Holy Spirit conviction passes. Don’t get the idea that a man, a woman, a boy, a girl can just saunter into the presence of God. The Bible, Jesus said, “No man can come unto me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.” And the Bible also says, God speaking, “My Spirit will not always strive with a man.” Isaiah 55 and verse 6 says, “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near.” The Holy Spirit can be so neglected and so insulted that He ceases to strive. And when you’re in a service like this and in a church like this where the Spirit of God is moving, God’s Holy Spirit is moving on your heart, my advice to you is to give your heart to Jesus Christ immediately—immediately. Youth passes. Holy Spirit conviction passes.

Life passes, and it passes quickly. If you’re going to be saved, the only time you’re going to be saved is in this life.

Oswald J. Smith reports the following: Satan and his demons were having a convocation seeing what they were going to do to dam the world. And one of the demons said, “Let’s say there’s no God.”

Another demon said, “No, that’s too obvious. There is a God, and He’s a just and a holy God.”

“Well, then,” said another demon, “let’s tell them that He is a just and a holy God, and He’ll not receive them.”

But another said, “No, He’s also a God of mercy.

“Well, then,” another demon said, “let’s tell them there is a God. He’s just and holy and full of mercy, but let’s just tell them there is plenty of time.”

And someone has well said, it’s a cliché, but it is still true, that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

There was a prayer meeting in Western Washington where they are logging. A man was confronted with the gospel, and he said, “I will attend to the matter when I am through hauling logs in one month.” Four weeks to the day he was swimming in Lake Lacoma. And with profanity on his lips, he drowned. Opportunity passed. He was one month too late.

A lady could not sleep. She wrote in her diary, “Next week, I will attend to the salvation of my soul.” That lady died the next day. She was one week too late.

A lady in New York City went to a revival meeting with her parents, and she was

under conviction. She said to them, “I will seek God tomorrow night.” Yet, on the next night, she decided to go to a dance rather than go back to a revival crusade, to the revival crusade. She was sitting at her dressing table putting a ribbon in her hair when she fell dead. She was one day too late.

Another young lady in New York City was in a revival crusade. She was with her aunt. Her Christian aunt pled with her to give her heart to Jesus Christ, and she refused. On the way from the revival crusade she was in a tragic accident and she died. She was one hour too late.

Opportunity passes. The fact of death is certain. The time of death is uncertain. This was their opportunity. They had a golden opportunity. Jesus said, “If you only knew the things that belong to you in this your day.”

My friend, you listen to me. This is your day! This is your opportunity! There are souls in hell who would give a million worlds like this one to have the opportunity that some of you have right now, not only to get saved, but to be soul winners, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. There’ll be a lot of praising in heaven, a lot of rejoicing. I don’t know there’s going to be any soul winning in heaven. All the souls you’ll ever win for all eternity you win this side of the grave, this side of eternity.

### **III. Jesus Wept Because of Their Smoldering Judgment**

Jesus wept. Jesus wept because of their superficial religion. Jesus wept because of their passing opportunity. I’ll tell you the third thing that made Jesus weep. Jesus wept because of their smoldering judgment. Look again in verse 43. Jesus, with tears coursing down His cheeks, said, “For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast up a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

Jesus looked 35 short years into the future and He saw the holocaust that was going to come—devastation!

Titus and the Roman army came against Jerusalem. They crucified Jews until there were no more trees left in the forest to crucify people with. That beautiful temple that had become a den of thieves was leveled to the ground. Jerusalem was plowed up and sowed with salt. It is estimated by historians that one million, one million Jews died in the siege. They tell us that blood ran down the streets of Jerusalem like water runs through the gutters after a heavy rain. And Jesus, who knew the future, sat upon that little colt there on the Mount of Olives and He looked down upon that city and His heart was broken. Superficial religion. Passing opportunity. Smoldering judgment. And Jesus

wept, and He said, “O, people of Jerusalem, if you only knew.”

I’m grateful for this prayer meeting crowd, but in the average church in our city you won’t have a corporal’s guard. And if you got down to Tunica, there’ll be crowds down there. If you’ll go to the pleasure palaces and the nightclubs, if you’ll go to the resorts, if you’ll go to the stadiums, people are giddy. They are leap, they are dancing, they are laughing, they are giggling. They’re not weeping.

I’m not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I’m going to tell you this as plainly as I know how to tell you it. Our nation is ripe for judgment, ripe for judgment. And unless there is a Holy Ghost revival, we’re in danger. And don’t you think that a new president is going to change things. Bill Clinton cannot bring revival, nor can Bill Clinton stop it. And if you think that a new president is going to change things, I want to remind you that eight years of Ronald Reagan and four years of George Bush produced a society that elected Bill Clinton. The answer is not in Washington. I’m telling you, friend, the answer is in God’s house with the people of God. And we need to learn how to pray. Judgment is very close for America. God has warned us. Proverbs 19 and verse 1 says, “He that being often reprov’d and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

## Conclusion

I’m finished with the message. Let me come to the conclusion. The things that break the heart of Jesus ought to break ours today. And I want us to continue to live a life of joy, but I want us to take time out for tears. We need to weep over lost souls. Psalm 126, verse 6, says this: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” If you don’t think that souls can be won in this day and age, it’s just telling me you’re not going. They can be won. There are people hungry. Not everyone will be saved. It’s like sowing. “He that goeth forth and, and weepeth, bearing precious seed...” Not every seed will sprout. You keep sowing the seed. Keep weeping. Keep watching. Keep working. Keep praying. You’ll have a harvest. Weep over lost souls. The Apostle Paul said in Acts 20, verse 31: “Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

The Salvation Army was meeting. They weren’t having the success they wanted. They had a great convocation. General William Booth, who was the founder of the Salvation Army, could not be there. He was sick. They said, “General Booth, send us a wire. Send us a message. Tell us what to do.” He sent a wire that had two words in it. “Cry tears.” Cry tears. God sees our tears.

May God forgive a dry-eyed church in a hell-bent world. One of these days, when

the clods fall on the casket, it'll be too late.

I had a woman call me. She was convulsing. "Pastor Rogers, Pastor Rogers, Pastor, Pastor, Pastor, Pastor." I said, "Get hold of yourself. What is wrong?" She said, "Pastor, my daddy has died, and my daddy was not a believer. My daddy died. He is a doctor, a medical doctor, and he died and is in hell. Pastor, my daddy is in hell. My daddy is in hell. My daddy is in hell." I said, "Your daddy is not in hell." "Oh, yes, he wasn't a believer." I said, "No. Last week I went by to see your daddy. I asked your daddy if he were saved. He said no. I asked him if he wanted to be saved. He said yes. And I prayed with your daddy. And your daddy repented of his sin and gave his heart to Jesus Christ. And your daddy is not in hell. Your daddy is in heaven. But I want to ask you a question. Did you ever witness to your father?" She said, "I was going to, I was going to." And I tried to say it as kindly as I could say it, but I said, "My lady, had it been up you, your daddy would have been in hell."

We need to take time out for tears. Some of you have members of your family that are lost. Some of you have neighbors that are lost. Some of you have business associates that are lost, and they superficially religious. They have an opportunity that they're absolutely oblivious to. And judgment for them and for America may be much closer than we realize.

I don't know what's going to happen at the end of this age that we're coming to, I really don't know. But I know this: that we need to be so full of Jesus that the things that break the heart of Jesus will break our heart. And take time out for tears.

You saw what we saw up on the screen. Friend, that's no fiction; that is America. May God have mercy.

Father God, seal the message to our hearts in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

# Daybreak for the Soul

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date:** May 29, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 22:19–22, 31–34, 54–61

**Main Scripture Verse:** *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”* Luke 22:31–32

## Outline

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- I. For All of My Fears, He Is the Faultless Savior
- II. For All of My Failures, He Is the Forgiving Savior
- III. For All of My Foes, He Is the Faithful Christ

Conclusion

## Introduction

Luke chapter 22. This is the night of the Last Supper, the Passover feast that would be the last of the Passover feasts that our Lord would bless as such, and it would then become the Lord's Supper. And we begin reading here in Luke chapter 22 and verse 19: *“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!”* (Luke 22:19–22) And then Simon, having heard about the betrayal, and having the warning of the forsaking of some disciples, begins to speak to the Lord. Well, let me say that the Lord first began to speak to Simon—if you'll look in verse 31: *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said,”*—that is, Jesus said—*“I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.”* (Luke 22:31–34) And then, if you will, move on over to verse 54 in this same chapter: *“Then they took him,”*—that is, Jesus—*“and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked on him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a*

*little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaeen. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”* (Luke 22:54–61)

Now, Peter failed his Lord. Three times he denied the Lord. Another Gospel says that he cursed and denied the Lord. What would you do with a preacher who cursed before a teenage girl? You say, “Well, I’d be finished with him.” Thank God, God wasn’t finished with Simon Peter. God had another day for Peter and another chance for Peter. Jesus had warned Peter, “Peter, you’re so confident. You’re so boastful. You have bragged that you’ll go with me to prison and to death. But before the rooster crows, you’re going to deny me three times.” Peter was absolutely certain that he would not fail. Look, if you will, in verse 33 of this same chapter. And Peter said, “*Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.*” (Luke 22:33)

How confident Peter was! But the Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9 that, “*The heart is deceitful above all things.*” I hear people say, “Well, if I know my heart, thus and such is true.” May I tell you, dear friend, you don’t know your heart. Even the best of us don’t know our hearts. “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*” (Jeremiah 17:9) Peter failed his Lord. And the interesting thing to me is that on this night when they had the Lord’s Supper Simon Peter said that he would not fail his Lord. He did fail his Lord. And not only did he fail his Lord, but he failed at his strongest point. What would you say that Simon Peter’s strongest point was? Would you not say it was courage? Peter was the one who got out of the boat to walk on the water. That took a brave man. Peter was the one in the Garden of Gethsemane who pulled out his sword and was going to fight the whole bunch. I would say that Peter’s strongest point was courage. And that’s where he failed—not at his point of weakness, but at his strongest point.

It’s an amazing thing. That seems to be a pattern in the Bible. What would you say that Abraham’s strongest point was? Faith! He was the father of the faithful. Where did Abraham fail? In the realm of faith, when he went down to Egypt rather than staying where God had put him and where God had placed him. Abraham, the father of the faithful, when he failed, he failed in the area of faith.

Moses—what would you say Moses’ great strength was? Meekness. The Bible says that he was the meekest man that ever lived. (Numbers 12:3) And yet we find this meek Moses losing his temper, striking the rock, failing to sanctify Almighty God, and ultimately failing to enter into the Promised Land, because of a lack of meekness and obedience on his part.

We spoke this morning about David. What would you say David's strong point was? I would say that David's strong point, if you read the life of David, you would have to say it was integrity. He said in the Psalms, *"I have walked in mine integrity."* (Psalm 26:1) What a great man he was! And yet, where did he fail? In the matter of his integrity.

Now, that ought to be a warning to every one of us. *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* (1 Corinthians 10:12) And, my dear friend, even your strength will become weakness when you begin to boast in the flesh. Peter was boasting. He knew his courage. He said, "Lord, I'll go with you to prison and to death." But what Peter had was dedicated self, dedicated flesh, and he went down. You see, my dear friend, the devil is tempted to tempt the boastful man. Now, Jesus said, "Peter, Satan has desired you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." What a wonderful promise! But Jesus said, "Peter, before the rooster crows, you will three times deny me."

What a night Peter had! I suppose it was all of his nightmares rolled into one. He'd seen them come and take his Lord away. He'd seen Jesus betrayed by one of His own friends, by Judas, Peter's friend and supposed brother, a disciple of Christ. He had seen Jesus mistreated, abused, manhandled. And then, on top of it all, Peter had three times denied the Lord. I suppose it was the darkest night that Peter had ever known. But Jesus said, "Peter, before the cock crow, you'll deny me three times."

When does a rooster crow? At the dawn of a new day. I want to talk to you for a few moments tonight about "Daybreak for the Soul." I want to talk to you about the sunrise of the soul. Why did Jesus say to Peter, "Peter, before daybreak you'll do this"? Well, because it actually happened that way. But I think what He was saying in a deeper way is that, "There's a lesson for you, Peter. Even though you've failed me, and even though you've gone through a dark night, there is going to be a new day dawn for you. When the rooster crows at the dawning of a new day, there will be a brand new start for you. And when you're converted, strengthen your brethren."

Now, look at the Scripture, if you will, in Luke chapter 22, verses 60 and following, and let's see if we can't learn something here: *"And Peter said, Man, I know not what thy sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew..."*—now, you know, roosters are strange things. I believe that the roosters believe that the sun comes up because they crow. And they're really an alarm clock with feathers—*"while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter"*—watch it now—*"remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."* (Luke 22:60–61)

There are three things that dawned upon Peter when that rooster crowed—three things that he learned. Many other things, I'm certain.

## **I. For All of My Fears, He Is the Faultless Savior**

But, you see, Peter had been so afraid that night. Courageous Peter was trembling. I mean, his world was coming apart. He didn't know what was going to happen, and he is trembling because of his misunderstanding that caused doubt. And his doubt caused his fear. You see, Peter was discouraged. He'd called Jesus Lord. But now his Lord had been betrayed. His Lord had been arrested. His Lord had been bound. His Lord had been mocked. His Lord had been betrayed. His Lord had been forsaken. And he's saying to himself, "I can't understand this. If He's the Messiah, how could all of this be happening?" And he denies the Lord three times. And after the third time, immediately the rooster crows, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord.

And do you know what that told Peter? Jesus is still in control. He is still sovereign. And what Peter learned, and what dawned upon Peter is this: "For all of my fears, He is still the faultless Savior. For all of my fears, He is the faultless Savior. He never makes a mistake. He is in perfect, complete control." Have you ever tried to make a rooster crow? Have you ever tried to stop one from crowing? Folks, this was not just a happenstance; it was a miracle. There were roosters all over Jerusalem, and not a one of them could open his beak until the Lord gave permission.

Now it looked to Peter for a while like everything had gone wrong, and it dawned upon him that Jesus Christ was in such minute control of all of the affairs of that day that not even a rooster could crow without His permission. Peter remembered the word of the Lord. He is the faultless Savior for all of my fears.

Now it was not God's will that our Lord be betrayed and beaten, and yet it was God's will. I mean, the Lord Jesus came to die. Jesus said, "No man taketh my life from me: I lay it down of myself." (John 10:18) Strange mystery of mysteries how wickedness and sin is still overruled by our great sovereign Savior! And where sin does abound, grace does much more abound. (Romans 5:20) And where our God does not rule, He overrules. And as I've told you before, He is faultless in all that He does. He's absolutely sovereign. And so, what Peter learned was this: "He's still in control. Judas' betrayal and my denial cannot stop the sovereign Christ." Second Timothy 2:13 says, "*If we believe not, he abideth faithful.*" (2 Timothy 2:13)

## **II. For All of My Failures, He Is the Forgiving Savior**

And so, what's the first thing he learned? What dawned upon him this new day? For all of my fears, He is the faultless Savior. And then, there's something else that dawned upon him: For all of my failures, He is the forgiving Savior. Notice again as we look in this scripture—Luke 22:61: "*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.*" (Luke 22:61) The Lord looked upon him.

Now, why do you think the Bible put that there? To show that our Lord in the midst of all of this was still concerned about His brother, His child, Simon Peter. It was a look of compassion. It was a look of injured love. It was a look of forgiveness. And even facing the cross and the abuse that He was about to take that is described, beginning in verse 63, the Lord Jesus took time to express that love, that forgiveness, to Peter. He looked at Peter. What a multitude of thoughts are wrapped up in that!

And I want to tell you tonight, friend, if there are things in your life that you don't understand—maybe there's sicknesses and sorrows, troubles, difficulties, and you say, "If He is the sovereign Savior, if He is the faultless Christ, why am I having all of these troubles?"—and you're surrounded by fears and frustrations, just remember what that rooster told Peter: He's still in control! And, dear friend, if you've failed Him, if you've denied Him, just remember what the crowing of a rooster told Peter: He still loves you. He still cares for you. You see, He doesn't change you so He can love you. He loves you so He can change you.

### **III. For All of My Foes, He Is the Faithful Christ**

Then, there's a third thing that dawned upon Peter that night that gave him a brand new day and a sunrise for his soul when that rooster crowed: Not only for his fears did he see that Jesus was the faultless Christ, and not only for his failures did he see that Jesus was the forgiving Christ, but also for his foes he saw that Jesus was the faithful Christ—the faithful Christ. You see, look in verse 61: "*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord.*" (Luke 22:61) What was that word of the Lord? Go back to verse 31: "*And the Lord said, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee.*" (Luke 22:31–32) The word that Peter remembered was that Jesus was praying for him. And this was the revelation of a rooster. When this rooster crowed, Peter said, "I remember I failed Him, but He's still in control. He still loves me, and He is praying for me."

You see, there were two who had a vital interest in Simon Peter that night. One was Satan, and one was Jesus. Satan, Jesus said, wanted to sift Simon Peter. You know, the word *Simon* means "that which is unstable," something that could be sifted through a sieve. Why do you sift something? You sift it to take out the impurities. But what did Satan want to do with those impurities? He wanted to sift Simon Peter to find Simon Peter's faults. And after he had put Simon Peter through his sieve, he wanted to take the residue of Simon Peter's failures and faults and use them to intimidate Simon Peter, to mock Simon Peter, to humiliate Simon Peter. The Lord Jesus was also interested in sifting Simon Peter, also interested in finding the fault in Simon Peter, but not to intimidate Simon Peter, but to love him, to cleanse him, to purge him, and to forgive

him. So, two were interested in Simon Peter and Simon's sin and Simon's fault.

But notice what it says—and I love it. Look at it: *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.”* But notice two beautiful words in verse 32: *“But I...”*—*“Satan”*: that's one side; *“but I”*: that is the other side—*“But I have prayed for thee.”* (Luke 22:31–32) I want you to learn something tonight, dear friend, that Peter learned when a rooster crowed—and that is that Jesus Christ is greater than Satan.

Now I hope you knew that already, but Satan's power is limited power. “Satan desires...but I have prayed for you.” I hear people who tell me they don't believe in the eternal security of the believer, and I say, “Well, why don't you believe in the eternal security of the believer, because the Bible says—Jesus speaking—*‘My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand?’*” (John 10:27–28) They say, “Well, no man could pluck you out, but the devil could take you out.” Well, in the first place, the Scripture just says, “neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” The word *man* is supplied. It's italicized. It's just supplied by the translator. But wouldn't that be a strange doctrine if the devil could take people out of the hand of God? You see, if he could, my friend, he would.

Now, suppose you believed that Satan could take you out of the hand of God. Well, has he taken you out yet? You say, “Well, no.” Well then, hasn't he been good to you? Now, isn't that a strange doctrine? You're going to heaven by the goodness of the devil. No, my friend, listen. The only reason he hasn't is because he can't—he can't. “Satan hath desired to have you...but I have prayed for you.” My dear friend, that's why we're kept: because our dear Lord is praying for us. Satan may desire you, but he cannot destroy you. Satan may sift you, but he cannot crush you. Satan may tempt you, but he cannot take you.

You say, “Boy, I'm so grateful that the Lord prayed for Simon. I wish He had prayed for me like that.” Well, turn with me, please, to John 17 for just a moment, and look with me in verse 9. Our Lord is praying His great high priestly prayer. Jesus says this: *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”* (John 17:9) The Lord Jesus now is praying for His disciples. And what does He pray for His disciples? Skip down to verse 15: *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”* (John 17:15) That is, “I am praying for them like I prayed for Simon Peter, Lord, not that you'll take them out of this world, but in this world, God, that you will preserve them, that you will keep them from the evil”—literally, “from the evil one.”

“Well,” you say, “all well and good; but He prayed for them back yonder, back then.”

Go on down to verse 20, if you will: *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”* (John 17:20) He might as well have put your name right there. Jesus Christ prayed a great high-priestly prayer, and He prayed, “Father, I pray for these disciples. This is what I pray for them, Lord: not that you’ll take them out of the world, but that you’ll keep them. And, Lord, not only do I pray for them; but, Lord, I look down through the tunnel of time, and every believer that will ever believe on me through the message of the apostles, I pray for them that you will keep them.”

Now I ask you a question: Has Jesus Christ ever prayed a prayer that was not answered? Not one! He said, “Father, I thank you, you always hear me.” (John 11:41–42) Now, my friend, if Satan desired to have Peter, and Jesus prayed for Peter that Peter’s faith fail not, could Peter’s faith have failed? No, not ultimately, because the Lord had prayed for him. Now, if our Lord has prayed for you, are you going to be kept by the power of God? Absolutely! Totally! Look again in Romans chapter 8 with me for just a moment and look in verse 33. Here’s the reason that we’re kept. This is what dawned upon Peter when that rooster crowed so long ago—Romans 8:33: *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also...”*—now, underscore this if it’s not underscored in your Bible—*“who also maketh intercession for us.”* And because He makes intercession for us, notice the rest of this: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is I Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:33–39) And why? Because Jesus has prayed for us. “Satan has desired you that he may sift you as wheat; but I’ve prayed for you, Peter, that your faith fail not.”

## **Conclusion**

Yes, Peter stumbled; yes, Peter failed; but when that rooster crowed, Peter remembered the word of the Lord and He saw, for my fears, He’s the faultless Christ—He’s still in control; for my failures, He’s the forgiving Christ—He still loves me; and for my foes, He is the faithful Christ—Satan has desired me, but Jesus has prayed for me, and He keeps me.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

—ROBERT KEEN

Peter learned all of this the night our Lord instituted that Last Supper, and for him it was the dawning of a new day.

# Failure Is Not Final

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** August 28, 2002

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 22:31–34

*“And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day,  
before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.”*

LUKE 22:34

## Outline

Introduction

- I. In Times of Failure, We Need to See the Sovereignty of Jesus
- II. In Times of Failure, We Need to See the Sympathy of Jesus
- III. In Times of Failure, We Need to See Our Security in Jesus

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Luke chapter 22? And as you are turning, let me ask you a question. Do you believe in giving a second chance to people? Well, you say, yes. Well, to all people? What if your pastor, this man standing here, were to curse in front of a teenage girl? Would you forgive me? What if not only would I curse in front of a teenage girl, but what if your pastor, the man standing here, were to deny the Lord Jesus Christ, the one that I have preached for so long? Would you forgive me? You say, well, I don’t know. I think I’d be finished with you. Thank God, God would not be finished with me.

There was a man, his name was Peter, who cursed and swore and denied Jesus in front of a teenage girl and God was not finished with him. His name was Simon Peter. You know the story but let’s read it here from Luke chapter 22 and beginning in verse 31. “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said,”—that is Jesus said to him—“I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.” Well, what I want us to learn tonight is this; that failure is not final. God is a merciful God, and His mercies are new every morning. Peter failed. He failed miserably. But in the story that we are going to study tonight, we are going to find out that there was a new day that dawned for Simon Peter.

Some of you tonight have failed. As a matter of fact, it is almost a miracle that you are here tonight in the service. And you just wonder, is there any hope for me? You see, even when we fail that does not mean, that God is finished with us. And it does not mean that when we fail nothing has been accomplished. One thing good, we can learn from our failures. And failure doesn't need to be a hitching post to tie us to, the past. Failure can be a guidepost to lead us into the future. Now I want to remind you that Peter was very sure that he would not fail.

Look, if you will, again in verse 33. Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." But notice the little word "I." Let me spell two words for you: sin—s-i-n; pride—p-r-i-d-e. What if, what's the middle letter in both of those words? "I." "I" is the middle letter in sin and in pride and that was, Peter's problem. There was a big "I" right in the middle. "Lord, I will go with you both to prison and to death." Now he was very confident. He was not hypocritical. His problem was that his confidence was misplaced. What you see here when Peter said, Lord, I am going to do this, was dedicated self.

Now the Bible has never told us to dedicate self. We are to deny self. And let me tell you something very quickly. If you don't learn to deny self, before long you will be denying Christ. Now that's what happened to Peter. Peter is full of self. He didn't know his heart. Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 9, says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Actually, that means the heart is incurably wicked. That's what the word means, desperately wicked, incurably wicked. There is nothing you can do with a self-life to improve it. Your heart is deceitful above all things. Every now and then, a man will say; well, if I know my heart, and then he begins to say something. Very frankly, you don't know your heart. Your heart is a Jacob. That's what the word here means. Your heart is a Jacob; it is deceitful above all things.

Now, when people fail, they generally don't fail at their weakest point. We would think they would but most fail at their strongest point. That's the reason they fail, it's they have confidence, in their strongest point. If you were to look at the life of Simon Peter, what would say that his strongest point was? It would have to be courage, courage. Peter was the one who drew out the sword and went after the servant of the high priest. That took a lot of courage. Peter was the one who got out of the boat to walk on water. Peter was a man overloaded with courage and where did he fail? He failed at the point of his courage. He was the one who trembled before a little teenage girl. That's an amazing thing. He didn't fail at his weak point. He failed at his strongest point.

Abraham, what would you say that Abraham's strongest point was? His faith, Abraham was the father of the faithful. He was justified by faith and he is the dean in the school of faith. But if you study his life, when Abraham failed, he failed at the point of faith. He went down to Egypt rather than staying in Canaan where God had placed him

and he lied about his wife, Sarah, in order to save his own hide. Now, why did he do that? Because he could not trust God to get him through that situation.

What do say Moses greatest strength was? Well, we don't even have guess about that. We know his great strength was his meekness. The Bible says he was the meekest man that ever lived. Meekness means the ability to comply, to be taught, to be led. But the meekest man, Moses, failed at his point of strength. And Moses became a murderer and killed the Egyptian, hid his body in the sand. And Moses spends forty years on the backside of the desert because he failed. He failed not at his weakest point; he failed at his strongest point.

David. What would you say David's strongest point was? David's strongest point was his integrity. He was a man after God's own heart, a man of integrity. And yet, where did he fail. He jettisoned his integrity and sacrificed his integrity on the altar of his lust.

Joyce and I read almost every morning from Oswald Chambers, "My Utmost for His Highest." And one statement from Oswald Chambers that I have learned from and shared with others through the years is this, "An unguarded strength is a double weakness." Now if you don't get anything else out of this message, you get that. "An unguarded strength is a double weakness."

Here was Peter's strength. Peter said, Lord, I will go with you to prison and to death. And yet he failed at that very point because it was dedicated self. Again, I remind you, you dedicate self, you are going to deny Jesus. Deny self and you will enthrone Jesus. When self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. When Christ is on the throne, self is on the cross. But both cannot be upon the same throne. So Peter failed. And he failed because of that self-confidence. And what a lesson that ought to be to me, to you. I Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 12 says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Now you may say, Pastor, you are going to some of those failures tonight. Thank God, I am not one of them. The proud man tempts the devil to tempt him. By the way, the devil will entice you into sin. He will cripple you and then blame you for limping. What the devil does before you sin is this; the devil will say, go ahead and do it. You can get away with it. And then after you sin, he says you will never get away with it. Now what he does, he will entice you to sin, and then he will judge you for that sin and blame you for that sin. He will come first as the tempter and then he will come as the accuser.

Well, Jesus had said to Peter, "Peter, before the cock crows, you will three times deny that you even know me." Now the night is the night when Jesus was betrayed by Judas. It was right after dark Gethsemane. And Jesus was led away to a mock trial and soon to be crucified. It was probably the worst night of Peter's life. And Peter is there

through that long night, the worst night that he has ever had. And he is warming himself at the fire of the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ, following Jesus afar off, when somebody picks up on Peter's accent, his language. They could tell that Peter is a hillbilly. Peter is from Galilee, and people talked about Galilee in that day the same way they talk about Southerners today. The way we talk. You know, we have, we have some, can I use the word Yankees here tonight? Yankees, you know if hadn't been for the Yankees, the South would have won the war. And they don't understand how we talk down here. We say, y'all. Now y'all, that just means one person, Y'all come see us. It doesn't mean everybody. If we want to talk about more than one, we say, all y'all.

They listened to Peter. Somebody said; you are a Galilean. Your speech betrays you. Once, twice, thrice, Peter denies that he even knew the Lord Jesus Christ and then he hears the rooster crow. Now when that rooster crowed, not only was that a reverie, it was a revelation. Peter learned some things in the crowing of that rooster. And what Peter learned is the title of the message tonight, "Failure is not final." If you fail, and you have or you will or you are, thank God there is hope for you. When the rooster crows, it means a new day is dawning. And the Bible says of our Lord that His mercies are new every morning. There are three things I want you to learn about the crowing of this rooster. Three things that, I pray God will write upon your heart.

## **I. In Times of Failure, We Need to See the Sovereignty of Jesus**

Number one. When you fail, in times of failure, we need to see the sovereignty of Jesus. Now does that word sovereignty bother you or does it give you trouble? It is because we Americans don't have a sovereign. The word sovereign means king. We have presidents. But, in the Bible, Jesus is King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Not only in the Bible, but in all eternity. He is sovereign. That means that He is Lord.

Now if you fail, get your eyes off your failure and get your eyes on the sovereign Lord. Now let me explain to you why I am talking about, the rooster showed him the sovereignty of Jesus. Look if you will in verses, in chapter 22, beginning in verse 60. "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest." That he's denying the Lord. "And immediately, while he yet spake," This is the third time he denied the Lord. "Immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew." The rooster, the rooster crowed, put it in plain English. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice." Or three times.

Now what is the interesting thing that deals with the sovereignty of God in this passage of Scripture? That rooster crowed at the exact precise time. Now friend, that is nothing less than a miracle. Two things I want you to try. One, I want you to, to make a rooster crow. Number two; I want to see if you can keep one from crowing. What our

Lord had to do was to keep every rooster in Jerusalem from crowing at all until that exact precise moment. Exactly, immediately after Peter had done what he had done, then the rooster crowed. Roosters are funny creatures. They think because they crow the sun comes up. They are really just an alarm clock with feathers. That's all they are. But here it is so interesting. That, that that rooster crows and then the Bible says Peter remembered the Word of the Lord. And when Peter remembered the Word of the Lord, Peter had to remember this, or had to think this. He is still in control. You know what Peter's problem was, why Peter was filled with fear, and why he denied the Lord. Things had gotten out of hand. I mean, look at it. Here his Lord and Master has been betrayed. He has been falsely accused. He is arrested. He has been carried away. He is bound, mocked, and forsaken. And it's all coming apart. Where is God? What Peter learns at this moment when that rooster crows, is that our Lord is still in complete control. Nothing has gotten out of hand.

You know, the Bible prophesies the Lord Jesus in Psalm 8. And here is what it says of the Lord Jesus, who is the perfect man. Verses 6 and following, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; and the fowl of the air." What is a rooster but a fowl of the air? "And the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." Our Lord has never laid down His dominion. And when, even when He was crucified, Jesus said; No man takes my life from me. I lay it down of myself.

Now what had happened to Peter was this. That when every thing unraveled, it turned to doubt, and doubt turned to fear and fear turned to denial. And what Peter is saying and seeing here, is that Jesus Christ is still in absolute, complete control.

May I give you a definition of faith that is not mine? I have learned it, but it is a great one. Faith is believing God in spite of appearances, and obeying God in spite of consequences. Now if you make notes, write that down. And, by the way, if you don't make notes, why not? Really, I mean, do you expect to hear anything? Would you go sit in a college class and not make notes? The weakest ink is better than the best memory. Now listen to this, faith is believing God in spite of appearances. What happened to Simon Peter was a, appearances said everything is out of control. And obeying God in spite of consequences. Peter was afraid of what might happen to him had he followed the Lord closely. And so he failed in the faith factor. And maybe that's where you have failed. Well, if that's where you are failing, remember the sovereignty of the Lord.

I have a motto on my desk. I look at it frequently when I am preparing sermons, when I am thinking, when I am planning. Somebody had it made for me. It says this, "Adrian, trust me. I have everything under control." Then it is signed Jesus. Don't you like it? "Adrian, trust me. I have everything under control." Do you believe that Jesus

has everything under control? You have to believe it when you read this story and see that rooster crowing at that exact precise moment and not another rooster crowed in all Jerusalem until that time. Now, we may deny Him but He is the sovereign God. Put this verse down, 2 Timothy 2 verse 13, “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”

Peter denied Jesus but Jesus did not deny Himself. And therefore, Jesus did not deny Peter. He is the Christ of sovereignty. He is still in control. That’s the reason I love Romans 8:28, “For we know that all things, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.” What are all things? Peter’s denial was an all-thing. Peter’s cursing was an all-thing. Did you know that God makes all things work to, together? Did you know that God will make your backsliding work together for good? It is not that backsliding is good. Backsliding is not good. And if you backslide, you are going to suffer. Peter wept bitterly. It would have been far better had he not done it. But Peter’s failure did not cause our God to fail. Say amen. Jesus did not fail. Even though Peter denied Him, He cannot deny Himself. Our Lord was in absolute sovereign control.

As a matter of fact, Jesus said, “Peter, Satan has desired you that he may sift you as wheat.” Now that phrase “has desired” literally means he has asked permission. Did you know that Satan had to get permission to sift Peter? Satan has desired you; i.e. he has asked permission. And the Lord gave him that permission. Satan had to get permission to afflict Job, and the Lord allowed, him that, ability. The point being this, as I said this morning in the message, God has Satan on a leash. Don’t get the idea that Satan can do anything to you he wishes. He cannot but what God allows it. And if God does allow it, God will allow it for a greater purpose. And you are going to find out that God will use the enemy’s weapon against the enemy just as David cut off Goliath’s head with the sword that Goliath had. Now, in times of failure we therefore need to see the sovereignty of Jesus. Got it? Okay.

## **II. In Times of Failure, We Need to See the Sympathy of Jesus**

Now here is the second thing. When you fail, not only do you need to see the sovereignty of Jesus, but in times of failure, we need to see the sympathy of Jesus. He never stops loving us even though we fail. Look if you will in verse 61. “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” What was the look? Was it a spiteful look, a hateful look, a vindictive look? No, it was a look of injured love. He is looking at Peter. He is still concerned about Peter. In the midst of His agony, pain, and humiliation, our Lord has His eyes upon his backslidden disciple. I have often told you that Jesus does not change you so He can love you. He loves so He can

change you. And look up here; if you are a failure, He still loves you. But now listen very carefully. He loves you as you are, but He loves you too much to leave you that way. His love is what changes you.

And so Jesus, did not come, really, to improve Peter's self-life, but to replace his self-life. Now Peter was surprised at his failure. Nobody was more surprised than Peter. As I told you before, Peter was not a hypocrite; he meant it when he said it, "Lord, I will go with you to prison and to death." Many times, I have done things. I have had thoughts and words to erupt out of me, and I have literally been surprised at myself. I would say; where did that come from? And I have learned that my self-life has not improved one scintilla of an iota since I have been saved. Neither has yours. And Peter did not realize what was in him. But when he learned that in spite of it all, this Jesus who is in complete control, has never, never, never stopped loving him. Listen to me tonight. There is nothing you can do that will make Him love you more than He loves you. And nothing you can do that will stop Him from loving you. That's something. You say, well, I have to earn His love. No, you don't. The Bible says, "That God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were"—what?—"yet sinners, Christ died for us." This is the sovereign grace of God. It is the mighty love of God. And if you are a failure, don't ever let the devil say; well, He is finished with you. He doesn't love you anymore. He has written you off. He has not. He loves you. This Christ of sovereignty is the Christ of sympathy. Thank God for that.

### **III. In Times of Failure, We Need to See Our Security in Jesus**

Now, here is the third thing I want you to learn. We need to learn in times of failure. We need to see in times of failure. We need to see our security in Jesus. Now again look in verse 61. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Well, the Bible says he remembered the word of the Lord. Well, what was that word of the Lord that Peter remembered? It was this, "Peter, I am praying for you." Go back if you will, go back up to verses 31 and 32, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon." By the way, Simon, the word Simon means unstable and shifty. Peter means rock. Jesus doesn't call him Peter; he calls him Simon. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted." That doesn't mean when you are saved, it means when you are turned. "Strengthen thy brethren."

Now, what's all of this about? There were two who were very interested in Simon Peter that day. And they were interested in Peter's failure. One was Jesus and the other was Satan. Now Satan desired to have Peter. Why? That he might sift him. Why would you sift wheat? Well, on the threshing floor, and I have seen the threshing floors in

Israel many times, there is chaff, there are rocks, straw, sticks, sometimes bits of paper. And so there is a sieve, you put the grain in the sieve and shake it, and sift it; and, as you sift it the rocks and the trash come to the top. What does the devil want to do in your life? He wants to sift you so that all the trash, the rocks, the junk in your life, the flaws in your life; he wants to find those flaws. And why does he want to find those flaws in my life and in your life? So he can accuse you, so he can condemn you. He is the accuser of the brethren. Now the Lord also wants you sifted, and He will allow the devil to do it. Now the devil is looking for the flaws; the Lord is looking for the wheat. You see, Jesus, the devil sifts you to find impurities. Jesus allows you to be sifted to cleanse you, not to condemn you.

Last time, one of the last times that Ron Dunn ever preached, and you may know that Ron Dunn is in heaven now. He was one of my favorite preachers. Ron Dunn preached here on a Saturday morning one of the greatest sermons I have ever heard. And he preached on this passage of Scripture. And he talked about how Satan had to get permission from Jesus in order to sift Peter. And here is the way Ron said it. He said, eh, "Satan was there listening when Peter said; "Lord, I will go with you to prison and to death." And old Satan saw Peter and heard Peter say that. And Satan knew how weak he was. And Satan knew what he was capable of doing. So Satan says, boy, I'd like to get my hands on him. I'd like to sift him. And Jesus said; sounds like a good idea to me too. Where Jesus and Satan both are agreed on the same thing. Satan had to get permission and Jesus allowed it. Now again, Satan wanted to sift Peter to find impurities to condemn him. Jesus wanted him sifted to find wheat to commend him and to cleanse him. But notice what Jesus said, "Satan hath desired you, but I have prayed." Now keep those in balance and you will understand the whole thing. Satan may desire you friend, but he cannot destroy you. Satan may tempt you, but he cannot take you. Jesus will allow it, that the impurities might come to the surface that you might see them and understand them. And yet, at the same time, that the wheat might be gathered at Jesus' feet.

Now, we are talking not only about our Lord's sovereignty, and not only our Lord's sympathy, but the security that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Peter, though he were a child of God, is still secure. Why? Because of his own innate goodness? No. But because of the mighty grace of God. Peter, Satan has desired you to sift you as wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.

Now, here is the point I want you to see. The same Jesus who prayed for Peter has prayed for you. You say, well, I don't know that He has. Well, I want to prove beyond a shadow of any doubt that he has. All right, I want you to take your Bible and turn to John chapter 17, verse 9. Jesus is praying what we call the great high priestly prayer. So many times the Lord's prayer is the prayer found in Matthew 6, "Our father which art in

heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Forgive us this day our trespasses.” Jesus never needed any forgiveness. That wasn’t the Lord’s Prayer. That was the disciples’ prayer. That was a model prayer. If you want to find out how the Lord prayed, He is not teaching us to pray. But this is His prayer. Our Lord in John 17 is praying His high priestly prayer for His church. And there is so much in that prayer that we are just going to cherry-pick a few verses. But look in verse 9. Jesus is praying for his disciples. And He said, “I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou has given me; for they are thine.”

Well you say; yes, those were the disciples who were alive at that time. He was praying for them. Well that’s true. But He was praying more than for just them, as we are going to see. And what did He pray for them? Fast forward down to verse 15. “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.” Literally from the evil one, from the devil. Not only Lord, I don’t pray that you will take them to heaven. I pray that Lord while they are here on earth, that you will keep them, that they will be secure. Just like he prayed for Peter. Well, you say; yes, still, but that was two thousand years ago. All right, now I want you to look at verse 20. Here is the shouting ground. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” Just write your name by that verse. Put your name by that verse. Our Lord prayed a prayer with a delayed detonation. Our Lord looks down through the tunnel of time. Our Lord sees you sitting in this building tonight and says, Lord, I don’t pray that You will take him or her out of this world but I pray for them Lord that You will keep them from the world. That’s what He prayed. And you say, well, what if His prayer was not answered? Are you kidding? Jesus said; I thank You Father that You always hear me. He never prayed a prayer out of the will of God. The perfect Son of God never prayed a prayer that was not a prayer of faith. His prayers are always answered.

Now what is our Lord Jesus Christ doing right now in the glory? Well, I will tell you what He is doing. Hebrews 7 verse 25, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” When the Bible says He is able to save unto the uttermost, that doesn’t mean He is able to save the worst of sinners. He is able to save the worst of sinners, and, in many verses they teach that, but that isn’t what this one teaches. When the Bible says He is able to save unto the uttermost, it means He is able to keep you to the end. He is able to save you all the way. He will never let you go. He will never lose you. He will never forsake you. He will keep you to uttermost. “Wherefore he is able to save unto the uttermost.” Why is He able to save unto the uttermost? Well He tells us. Because He ever lives to make intercession for us. The same Jesus who prayed for Simon Peter, there is the Jesus who is now in the glory praying for you, praying for you.

If you are a failure, He is praying for you. Does that encourage you? It ought to. Suppose you knew that right behind that door up there, Jesus is on His knees in a physical body praying for you. Would that encourage you? It shouldn't encourage you one whit more than to know He is in the glory praying for you and encouraging you. Now the finished work of Jesus is Calvary. The unfinished work is His intercession. Jesus is praying for you. "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will never, no never desert to its foes. That soul, thou all hell should endeavor to shake, I will never, no never, no never forsake."

So I fail; you fail; Simon Peter failed: the best of saints in the Bible failed. But when the rooster crowed, a new day was dawning. God's mercies are new every morning. You can wake up tomorrow morning as clean, as pure as the driven snow. Our God does not hold grudges. And there is no problem too great for Him to solve. He is the Christ of sovereignty. He will never stop loving you. He is the Christ of sympathy. And He will keep you. He is the Christ of security. Now you can stonewall Him if you want. And you can go on in your rebellion if you want and just make it harder on you. Or you can say, Lord Jesus, thank You that You love me so much. And Peter went out and wept bitterly. Perhaps tonight some of us might weep bitterly over our sins.

We had a great Men's Conference Friday night and Saturday morning. How many of you guys were there? Let me see your hands. Wasn't it great? It was a great conference and Steve Farrar was the speaker. Steve Farrar said a lot of wonderful things, but he said something about repentance that I think was so great. He quoted the Puritan writer, Thomas Watson. Now this is going to sound inelegant but it was so, so true. He said, "Real repentance is the vomiting of the soul. The vomiting of the soul." Have you ever eaten anything that made you nauseous and sick? Something that just was hideous, terrible. Something there that is awful. Something that causes you to wretch. You say; I am sick of it. I want to get it up. I want to get it out. That's the way Peter felt when he went out and wept bitterly.

## **Conclusion**

If you think tonight that I am trying to get you to act casual toward your sin, I am not. I am praying that your sin will break your heart and as Steve Farrar said, you will heave from your heels. You say, Lord, I'm sick of it. I am sick of it. I am tired of it. And I honestly, earnestly, sincerely repent. Peter wept bitterly over his sin and there was a new day for him. And there can be a new day for you. Aren't you glad He is the God of the second chance? And aren't you glad He will never, no never, no never, never, never let you go. He won't do it. But now, you can stay in difficulty with all that on the inside as long as you want. But when you are willing to come to Him, the Bible says in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to

cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Bow your heads in prayer and thank Him for His mercy with you. Friend, if He had not been merciful with me, I would have been a goner a long time ago. I never would have made it more than a half a century serving the Lord. But I am so grateful that His mercies are new every morning. As a new day dawned for Peter, a new day has dawned for me. Thank Him for it. Now, what ever your problem is, and where your failure is, is probably because you have let doubt come into your mind. You have not just seen how great and sovereign our God is. Remember faith is believing God in spite of appearances and obeying God in spite of consequences. See Him in your life as sovereign. He is over all those problems that you think you have. See His sympathy. He loves you. Don't ever let the devil tell you that He has stopped loving you. You are the object of His love. Friend, He loved you before you ever even knew Him. And to know and understand that He is praying for you. He has prayed that your faith will not fail. Peter's faith never failed. Yes, he swore; he denied the Lord, but he was the same Simon Peter who became the flaming Apostle of Pentecost. Why? Because our Lord prayed for him and kept him. He will never let you go.

“Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus that You will seal the message to our hearts. Thank you for doing it. Amen.”

# Strength in Times of Crisis

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 18, 1999

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 22:31–62

*“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”*

LUKE 22:32

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## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and be finding, please, the Gospel of Luke chapter 22— Luke chapter 22—and when you’ve found it, look up here.

She walked into Columbine High School a promising student—beautiful, long hair, sweet smile. Twenty-four hours later, she was carried out on a stretcher, a Christian martyr. “Do you believe in God?” one of the gunmen asked her. She was sitting in the library reading her Bible. Other students had climbed under desks, gone into closets. This man, wearing a long black trench coat, snarled at her and said, “Do you believe in God?” She said in a voice that could be heard all over the library, “Yes, I do!” She was fully aware of what the consequences would be, but she said, “Yes, I believe in God.” And then that gunman in the long black trench coat said with a sneer, “Why?” And he pulled the trigger, and Cassie Bernall looked into the face of Jesus. She stepped over

into the very presence of Jesus.

Now she had had a dramatic and a wonderful conversion to Jesus Christ. Cassie was born again. She had had difficulty in her life. She had dabbled some in the occult. She had experimented some in drugs. But somebody told Cassie Bernall about the Jesus that I'm going to preach about today, and she gave her heart and her life to Jesus. After her death, her younger brother went into her desk and looked at the things that were on her desk, and he found there a note that she had written just the past Sunday after church. And here's what it said—in her own words: "Now I have given up on everything else. I have found it to be the only way to really know Christ and to experience the mighty power that brought Him back to life again and to find out what it means to suffer and to die for Him. So, whatever it takes, I will be one who lives in the fresh newness of life of those who are alive from the dead." That's what she said on the way home from church on Sunday, and then met the Lord Jesus, the Giver of all life.

I want to tell you something, friend: A crisis does not make martyrs; it only reveals them. You are a martyr before you ever die for the Lord Jesus, and you may be a martyr without ever dying for the Lord Jesus Christ. But today in our study we are going to talk about somebody else; this time not a little girl, but a big, burly fisherman named Peter, who denied Christ, who in a time of crisis, when he thought that his life was in danger, cursed, swore, and denied Jesus Christ—the big fisherman, Simon Peter. As we look at little Cassie and big Simon Peter, I think each of us need to do a little introspection and we need to ask ourselves, "What would we do if we were faced with a crisis like that? And if indeed we were faced with a crisis like that, where would we find the strength?"

The passage that we're going to look at today takes place right after the Last Supper that our Lord had with His disciples. It was Passover. He had talked to them about His coming crucifixion, His passion, and His glory. They didn't really understand. They didn't comprehend. He had reminded them one more time of His enduring love for them. And then He warned Simon Peter, "Simon, before the rooster crows, you're going to deny me three times." (Luke 22:34) Simon Peter said, "Oh, no, Lord, not me. Why, Lord, I would go with you to prison and to death!" (Luke 22:33)

Look at the scripture—Luke 22, verse 31: "*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him,*"—that is, Peter said to Jesus—"Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said,"—that is, Jesus said—"I tell thee, Peter, the cock"—"the rooster"—"shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." (Luke 22:31–34)

I want to talk to you today about courage in a time of crisis. I want to talk to you today about having strength in time of crisis—how to be a courageous Christian. For I

am convinced that one of the curses of twentieth-century Christianity is cowardly Christians, those who will not stand up, those who are not bold believers. We talk about “the moral majority.” No, friend, it is the silent majority that is the problem, or even the silent minority. A wise man has said, “It is the strategy of Satan to keep good people silent in times of crisis in an evil time.” What we need is a contagious epidemic of holy boldness. And I’m afraid that many of us are like that.

Now I’m not talking about human courage. Human courage—some people have that. Did you read in the paper the other day where that man went swimming with the whales—with that whale in Sea World? They found his nude body. The whale had taken that man and made a plaything out of him. After the park had closed, he went in there with this gigantic killer whale, evidently, to swim. Now, friend, that’s courage; but that’s not what I’m talking about. People handle snakes in church services. Some call that “holy boldness.” I call it foolishness. No, we’re not talking about holy boldness. I’m not talking about just a courageous attitude. Some have that. Some have natural boldness.

And some of us have natural fears. I read about two men who were out bear hunting. They were in the snow and they saw some bear tracks. One man said, “You follow the tracks and see where he’s going. I’ll follow these and see where he’s been.”

Some of us have natural boldness, and some of us have natural fears; but I want to talk to you today about holy boldness. And again, when I’m talking about holy boldness, I’m not talking about arrogance. Holy boldness is humble boldness. I want to give you four principles today from this passage of Scripture. Three of them will challenge you, and one of them will encourage you. But I want you to see these four principles today that are going to come right out of this story, so keep your Bibles open.

## **I. Your Adversary Will Sift You**

Number one: Your adversary will sift you. You have an adversary.

### **A. His Personality Described**

Now, notice what it says here in verse 31: “*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired...you.*” (Luke 22:31) Do you know what the name *Satan* means? It means “adversary.” It means “the enemy.” You have an enemy. You do. Not Christians in general; *you* have an adversary—and his name is Satan. He is not some figure of speech. He is not some figment of your imagination. He is real. He is personal, intelligent, cunning, and destructive. Satan is only one of his names. He is also called “*the devil*,” (Matthew 4:1, 5, 8, 11; 13:39; 25:41; Luke 4:2–3, 5–6, 13; 8:12; John 8:44; 13:2; Acts 10:38; 13:10; Ephesians 4:27; 6:11; 1 Timothy 3:6–7; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8, 10; Jude 1:9; Revelation 2:10; 12:9, 12F 20:2,10) which means “slanderer.” He is called “the accuser of the brethren.” (Revelation 12:10) He is called “the deceiver.” He is called “the dragon.” (Revelation

12:3–4, 7) He is called “the father of lies.” (John 8:44) He is called “*the god of this world.*” (2 Corinthians 4:4) He is called “the serpent.” (Revelation 12:9, 14–15; 20:2) He is called “*the destroyer.*” (1 Corinthians 10:10) He is called “*the tempter.*” (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5) He is called “the evil one.” Here he is called Satan—and it means “adversary.”

### **B. His Plan Disclosed**

Now his personality is described. His plan is disclosed: he sifts the saints. What does that mean, to *sift*? Well, He’s talking about wheat. The name *Simon* means “something that’s unstable.” Peter had two names: one, Peter, which meant “rock”; the other means something like “wheat that can be sifted.” They would put wheat in a sieve, a screening process, and they would shake it. And the wheat would go through the sieve, and the straw and the rocks and the debris would remain on top. So, why would you sift wheat? To discover and to reveal the impurities, the dirt, the trash that is in the wheat. Now Jesus said, “Look, Peter, you have an adversary, and he is going to sift you. He’s going to reveal the trash that is in your life.”

I want to say this: You have an adversary that is doing exactly the same thing to you. Don’t get the idea that when you get saved, your battle with Satan is over. Peter was a saved man. Jesus talked about his faith, but He also talked about his adversary. You say, “Well, I never have any difficulty with the devil.” Then I wonder if you’re saved. *If you’ve never met the devil, you and the devil have been going in the same direction; you’re in collusion with him. Turn around, and you’ll be in collision with him.* Peter was a man of God. He loved God.

Now, why does Satan sift the saints? Why is your adversary trying to find faults in you? And, friend, there are plenty of them he could find in this preacher. Why is he doing that? So he can take those faults and accuse us and condemn us and point out of faults, our failures, our foibles, our flaws before Almighty God. He is called “the accuser of the brethren.” So he wants to surface these things.

But there’s someone else who points out your flaws and your faults—and that is the Holy Spirit. What is the difference between satanic accusation and Holy Spirit conviction? Well, the devil does it to condemn us; the Holy Spirit does it to cleanse us. And you had better learn the difference between accusation and conviction. I wish I had more time to talk about that.

## **II. Your Abilities Will Sabotage You**

But I want you to see this. Number one: Your adversary will sift you. And if he doesn’t, it doesn’t mean that you are saved. It may mean that you’re not saved. You have an adversary, and as the adversary sifted Simon Peter, he will sift you. Principle number two: Your abilities will sabotage you. Now sabotage is an inside job. It doesn’t have to

do primarily with what some army does from the outside, but what some enemy within the fortress does. Notice, if you will, here in verses 33 and 34, Peter is talking now about his abilities: *“He said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.”* (Luke 22:33) Peter was so sure of his own ability.

Now Peter was sabotaged, basically, by three things. All of them were in him.

### A. **Self-Confidence**

Number one: self-confidence. Peter was naturally aggressive, self-confident, and bold. You know, there are a lot of people who are trying to develop self-confidence today. That’s the one thing that we need to lose. That is the only thing we need to lose. Over and over again there are courses and courses and courses on self-confidence. Self-confidence is the way down. The Bible says, *“He that trusteth...his heart is a fool.”* (Proverbs 28:26)

You know, the modern-day Simon Peter would have been Muhammad Ali. Remember that old story—it’s a good one: Ali got on an airplane, sitting there drinking his Coke and eating his peanuts, and the stewardess said, “Sir, buckle your seatbelt.” Ali said, “Superman don’t need no seatbelt.” She said, “Yes, and Superman don’t need no airplane either.”

That’s the kind of a guy old Simon Peter was. I mean, Simon Peter was the big, burly fisherman. He was the leader. He was filled with self-confidence. Friend, listen to me. If you don’t deny yourself, you’re going to deny Jesus. Put it down big, plain, and straight: If you don’t deny yourself, you’re going to deny Jesus. What was his problem? Self-confidence. He was bragging when he should have been trusting.

### B. **Prayerlessness**

His second problem was prayerlessness. He was sleeping when he should have been praying. Go back and look, if you will, in verse 44 of this same chapter. Jesus is in Gethsemane praying. *“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”* (Luke 22:44–46) Peter, who cursed, swore, and denied the Lord Jesus Christ, was sleeping when he should have been praying.

Now I’ve talked about self-confidence, which is pride. Do you know what the twin sister of pride is? Prayerlessness. Do you know why we don’t pray? Let me tell you why we don’t pray: because we’re quite confident we can make it without prayer. That’s why we don’t pray. I mean, when we’re in a crisis, we pray, don’t we? Sometimes we come to the end of the day, and we say, “O God, I really blew it today; dear God, O God, forgive me; O God, what a mess,” at the end of the day. But what did Jesus teach us to

pray in the model prayer? *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.”* Now, when do you pray for daily bread? When you’re about to go to sleep? No. In the morning. *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”* (Matthew 6:8–13) When is that prayer to be prayed? After we’ve messed up at the end of the day? No, in the morning, to keep us out of difficulty.

Jesus said, “Look, Peter. Get up and pray. If you don’t, you’re going to get into difficulty.” Peter was bragging, when he should have been trusting. He was sleeping, when he should have been praying. And if you are a prayerless Christian, you are a prideful Christian. And when the crisis comes, I’m afraid that you’re not going to make it. I think the worst thing about our prayerlessness is not our prayerlessness; it’s our arrogance. It’s our pride that keeps us from praying.

### C. **Fleshly Courage**

Here’s a third thing that caused him to deny the Lord—and it was fleshly courage. Now I said I’m talking about holy boldness, not fleshly courage. Fleshly courage may be the thing that is our problem. Look in verse 33: *“And he said unto him,”*—Peter said to Jesus—*“Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.”* (Luke 22:33) Now, what was Peter’s strongest point? Peter’s strongest point was his self-confidence and his courage.

If you’ll study the great saints of God in the Bible, you’re going to find out that when they fell, they did not fall at their weakest point; they fell at their strongest point. Have you ever thought about that? They fell at their strongest point. What was David’s strongest point? His integrity—that’s where he fell. What was Abraham’s strongest point? His faith—that’s where he failed when he told that half-lie, or half-truth, which was a whole lie. What was Peter’s strongest point? Dear friend, it was his courage—and that’s where he failed. Oswald Chambers said, “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.” Now, folks, that’s not mine; that’s Chambers’. But if you don’t hear anything else, you hear that.

Notice what Peter did. First of all, he jumped into the battle now, just before he denies Christ, with his human courage. Look, if you will, in verse 50 and see what happens: *“And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.”* (Luke 22:50) The scene is the Garden of Gethsemane. They are coming to take Jesus. One of them jumps up, pulls out a sword, and you know who it was: it was Peter. The other Gospels tell us that. And here is a man named Malchus, and Peter cuts off Malchus’s right ear. Now Peter didn’t mean to do that; he meant to cut off his head. But what do fishermen know about sword fighting? And so he cuts off his right ear.

Now, you think about that. What was wrong with that?

## 1. The Wrong Enemy

Well, first of all, it was the wrong enemy. Malchus was not the enemy that day. You know what the devil loves to do? He loves to get us going around cutting ears off people, when he is the enemy. *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers.”* (Ephesians 6:12) After all, Malchus was only a servant doing what he told to do. Sure, he was a lost man, but he was not the enemy there that day.

## 2. The Wrong Weapon

Not only was there a wrong enemy; there was a wrong weapon. Look, if you will, in verse 49. Somebody there took a sword; it was Simon Peter. *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.”* Friend, we’re in a battle, and we’re not going to win that battle with a sword, whether it be an economic sword, a political sword, or a military sword. We’re not going to win the battle that way. *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.”* (2 Corinthians 10:4)

## 3. The Wrong Energy

He had the wrong energy. He wakes up in the strength of the flesh to fight a battle in the strength of the flesh. And no wonder he fails—because *“the spirit...is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* (Matthew 26:41)

## 4. The Wrong Attitude

He had the wrong attitude. He’s filled with vengeance and bitterness and wrath. The Bible says, *“The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”* (James 1:20) You know, the worst thing that we have to deal with as Christians is fanatics. Do you know what a fanatic is? Somebody gave this definition of a fanatic: “He is somebody who, having lost sense of his direction, doubles his speed.” That is a fanatic. Can you hear Malchus? I mean, had Jesus not put that ear back on Malchus, and someone said, “Hey, Bud, what happened to your ear?” “Oh,” he said, “some hotheaded Christian cut it off.” Do you think that is going to be a good testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ—when we go around whacking on people? No.

What I’m trying to say, folks—listen to me—is that your adversary will sift you. Your abilities will sabotage you. When you decide that you’re going to go out and live this Christian life in your own flesh, you’re going to go down. You’re going to find that you’re going to fail. Do you know what sin is? I’ve often said this. *Sin is an unexpected opportunity compounded by an undetected weakness and an unprotected life.* Put those together. An unexpected opportunity: you don’t know this is going to happen until it happens. Go back to little Cassie Bernall. She did not know that was going to happen that day when those men in the Trenchcoat Mafia came in there. But you know what she did have? She had a protected life, sitting there reading the Word of God, sitting

there filled with God. But if we had that unexpected opportunity, that undetected weakness, and that unprotected life, we are going down.

Here was Simon Peter. Peter did not realize what was going to happen. Listen. You are going to have unexpected opportunities to confess or deny Christ—perhaps tomorrow, perhaps on the ball field, perhaps in the business office, perhaps at the water cooler. Somewhere, over dinner, in the neighborhood, you're going to have to make up your mind: Am I going to confess Jesus Christ, or am I going to deny Jesus Christ?

### **III. Your Actions Will Surprise You**

Now, here's the third thing. Listen. Your adversary will sift you. Your abilities will sabotage you. Number three: Your actions will surprise you. Look in verse 33. He said, *"Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."* (Luke 22:33) It is obvious he did not expect to deny Jesus Christ. Well, what does the Bible say in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 12? *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* (1 Corinthians 10:12) Proverbs 28, verse 26—I've already mentioned this: *"He that trusteth his own heart is a fool."* (Proverbs 28:26) Jeremiah 17, verse 9: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."* (Jeremiah 17:9) And so many times we have an idea, "Oh, when it happens to me, I'll stand true; I'll stand tall." Well, friend, if you are trusting in your own abilities, I'm going to tell you, your actions are going to surprise you, and you will not be as strong as you think that you are.

Now, what about this man, Simon Peter? Well, he failed, but he learned that failure was not final. I don't think there's a one of us, as we look back on our lives, but what we would say, "Dear Lord, I've not been the courageous Christian that I should have been or could have been."

### **IV. Your Advocate Will Secure You**

Well, I told you I would give you three truths that would challenge you and one that will comfort you. Here's the comforting truth. Are you ready for this? Your Advocate will secure you. You have an adversary, but you also have an Advocate. Look at this. What a blessing this is! Look again in verse 31: *"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:"*—that's the adversary—*"but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."* (Luke 22:31–32) Don't you like that? That's the Advocate. Do you know what the word *advocate* means? It's just a fancy name for lawyer.

Satan wants to sift us. Why does he want to sift us? Satan wants to sift us to find those impurities, that dirt, that trash that's in our lives and point the finger of accusation at us before the throne of God. But when he does that, thank God, we have an

Advocate. Put down in your margin 1 John chapter 2 and verse 1: *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.”* John is not encouraging us to sin because we can get forgiveness—no, no, no, no, no: *“These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.”* But now, notice this: *“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* (1 John 2:1)

Now, folks, let me give you some encouragement today. Jesus knows all about you, and He still loves you. He knows far more about you than you know about you. Now I said that your actions will surprise you. They did not surprise Jesus. Did Jesus say, “Oh, I never would have thought that about old Simon; I’m so disappointed in Simon”? Not Jesus; no! He said, “Simon, you are going to deny me, but when your faith fails not, strengthen your brethren.” (Luke 22:32) Jesus was not finished with him.

I’ve often told you, *God doesn’t love us because we’re valuable; we’re valuable because He loves us.* He loves us by His sheer grace. And those of you who are parents, don’t you ever tell a child, “Sweetheart, if you do that, God won’t love you anymore.” There is nothing you can do to stop Him from loving you. There is nothing you can do to make Him love you any more or any less. He loves you by sheer grace.

Let me read something to you now. We’re talking about your Advocate who secures you. Romans 8—put it in the margin; begin in verse 33: *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?”* The old devil is trying to find all this stuff to sift us about and find these impurities. *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:33–39) Say amen. Amen. Glory to God.

Peter failed. He failed miserably, ignominiously, and he failed of his own choice. He made his own mistakes. He set the stage by self-confidence to fail, but he had an Advocate who secured him. *“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* (1 John 2:1) Now, folks, He prays for us, just as He prayed for Simon Peter. You say, “Now, wait a minute. He’s talking about Simon Peter; He’s not talking about me.” Friend, He is praying for you, just as He prayed for Simon Peter. What did John tell us, the beloved apostle? *“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ.”* And if you are any man, any woman, that includes you.

Let me just digress here a little bit. Just keep your Bible open to this passage in Luke 22. But if you really want to get a blessing sometime, just read John chapter 17, which is the high priestly prayer of our Advocate, Jesus Christ. And this is what Jesus prayed in John chapter 17, verse 9, for His disciples: *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”* (John 17:9) And then he prays in John 17, verse 15, *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”* (John 17:15) That’s a masculine singular ending. It means “from the evil one”—“keep them from Satan.” And you say, “Well, that’s wonderful. He prayed for Peter, James, and John, but He didn’t pray for me.” Well, go on down to verse 20 now, and get ready to shout: *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”* (John 17:20) You might as well put your name there, folks. Just take that passage, open your Bibles to John 17 and verse 20, and write your name there. Jesus is praying for you. Not only did He pray for you; He is praying for you. The Bible teaches in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25 that “He ever lives to make intercession for us.” (Hebrews 7:25)

The adversary will sift you. Your abilities will sabotage you. Your actions will surprise you, but your Advocate will secure you. Jesus will secure you. “Peter, Satan wants you. He wants to sift you as wheat. But, Peter, I have prayed for you.”

*The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
I will, I will not desert to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.*

—JOHN RIPPON

That’s the promise of our Lord. And this same cursing, stumbling, failing Simon Peter became the flaming apostle of Pentecost, because Jesus Christ prayed for him.

You know, do you know what I love about this? Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew Peter, and He knew two things about Peter: He knew the worst about him, and He knew the best about him. He knew that he would deny the Savior, but He also knew he had faith. He said, “I prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” (Luke 22:32) Jesus could see past the crust; Jesus could see past the weakness; Jesus could see past the foibles and the failures; and Jesus saw, down in his heart, faith. And, friend, that’s what secures you: your faith in an Advocate who will never leave you nor forsake you. And that, to me, is an encouraging thing.

Why did Jesus allow him to be sifted? I mean, could Jesus have stopped it? Of course He could have! He has complete authority over Satan. Now some people don’t believe in eternal security. Do you know what they believe? They say, “Well, no man can take the other hand of Jesus, but the devil could.” Do you really believe the devil could? Well, friend, if he could, why hasn’t he? You think about it. If he could, why

hasn't he? Well, maybe he's just been nice to you. Well, that's a strange doctrine, isn't it? You're going to heaven by the goodness of the devil. Think about it. No! The only reason he hasn't is because he can't. *"Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."* (Luke 22:31–32) Do you think Jesus' prayers would fail? No. He said, when He prayed concerning Lazarus, "Father, I thank you that you always hear me." (John 11:41) He never had a prayer that fell to the ground. And He has prayed for us, and "He ever lives to make intercession for us."

Well, then, if Satan is limited in his power, why did the Lord allow it? Well, Satan heard Peter, boastful Peter. Satan said, "I know some things about him. I'd like to get him in my sieve." And Jesus said, "Yes, that's a good idea: go ahead." Jesus allowed it. When the Bible says, *"Satan hath desired you,"* it means he had to ask permission. He had to ask permission, and the Lord allowed it. And, you see, God allows the devil to come against us to reveal to us, many times, what was in our heart. And He'll do that to you, and He'll do that to me.

Now, does that mean therefore that if Jesus is protecting us, it doesn't make any difference how we live or what we do? Oh, folks, listen. Look in verse 62: *"Peter went out, and wept bitterly."* (Luke 22:62) Don't you think for one second that if you can't lose your salvation, you have nothing to lose when you deny Christ. Do you know who the happiest man on earth is? The man who takes shame for Jesus Christ. I read about those early apostles, and the Bible says, *"They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."* (Acts 5:41) I could tell you in my own personal life, those times when I have taken slings and arrows for Jesus Christ have been the highest moments of joy I've ever known. I want to tell you something else: *The most miserable man on earth is not an unsaved man or woman. The most miserable person on earth is a saved man or woman out of fellowship with Jesus Christ.* Is that not true? The most joyful people are those who stand for Jesus.

Simon Peter learned this lesson, and he then is no longer boastful, but he wrote in his epistle, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."* (1 Peter 5:8) Peter learned to renounce his self-confidence, put his confidence in Jesus Christ, and became the flaming apostle of Pentecost. And the Bible says that when those people saw them, they marveled: *"When they saw the boldness of Peter and John...they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."* (Acts 4:13) That's the difference.

You know what Peter knew when that rooster crowed? You know, Jesus said, "Now, Peter, before the rooster crows, you're going to deny me three times." (Luke 22:34) How many of you were ever raised where you had roosters that crowed in the morning? Let

me see. Some of you kids have never seen a rooster. Two things about a rooster, friend, in the morning: number one, you can't make him crow; and, number two, you can't keep him from crowing—isn't that right? An alarm clock with feathers—that's all they are. Now, you think of all the roosters in Jerusalem. And our God kept every one of them quiet until that precise moment; and in that precise moment, He made one of them crow, just like that. Do you know what Peter had to know? I'll tell you what he knew: "My God is still in control." Do you know why Peter denied Jesus? He was petrified. They were taking Him to the cross. It looked like He was out of control. He had been beaten, denied, cursed, whipped, and falsely accused on his way to Calvary. It looked like everything was out of control. And then, the rooster crowed, and He was still in perfect control.

## **Conclusion**

Friend, you listen to me. We're on the winning side. There is not a blade of grass that moves without my Father's permission. And I'm going to stand true to Him, God helping me—not in my own strength. But God give us some more Cassie Bernalls who will say, "Yes, I believe in God. Yes, I'm not ashamed of Jesus. Yes, I'll carry my Bible to school. Yes, I'll bow my head and pray in the restaurant. Yes, I'll share my faith with my neighbor. And I will not deny the Lamb of God, who suffered, bled, and died on that cross for me." And thank God that when we do, He's there to secure us.†

# The Dawning of a New Day

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 29, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 22:31–34**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sovereign Control of Jesus
- II. The Sympathetic Compassion of Jesus
- III. The Steadfast Commitment of Jesus

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, amen. Would you find Luke chapter 22 in the Bible? And then look up here and I want to ask you a personal question. Don't answer it out loud, but answer it honestly. Has there ever been a time in your life when you loved Jesus Christ more than you love Him now, ever a time in your life when you loved Jesus Christ more than you love Him now? If so, you need a revival.

To cease to be better is to cease to be good. To fail to grow in our Lord and Savior means that, truly, we're backslidden. Some, perhaps, love the Lord not as much as they did. Others are even cold and indifferent. How many of you have Jesus Christ in your heart as a bright, living reality? Or is Jesus Christ somewhere beyond the clouds, someone that you may think about from time to time? How many have prayer continually bubbling up in your heart, living lives of constant praise, saying over and over again, "What a mighty God You are! Lord Jesus, I love You, I praise You, I bless You?" How many of you have allowed little sins to come into your heart and life? You find yourself watching things in movies and television that you would have been horrified before. You find yourself being lax in the attendance in the service of God. You can go a whole day and hardly think of God. Your prayers are brief, hurried. You do not take time to be quiet and holy before God. Is that you? You need revival. Our church needs revival.

I want us to look here in Luke chapter 22, verse 31. This is a story of a man who had a personal revival. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter,

that the cock shall not crow, shall not crow this day before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.”

Here was a man who failed, and he failed miserably, but for Peter there was the dawning of a new day. And I want there to be in my heart and in your heart the dawning of a new day. I want us to learn that God is merciful and God forgives and God restores and God revives.

Now let me ask you a question: If you had a pastor who cursed and swore in front of a teenager girl, what would you do? If you have a pastor that openly, blatantly denied Jesus Christ, what would you think? Many of us would say, “Well, I’m through with him.” Well, Peter did that, but God wasn’t through with Simon Peter. And thank God, He is not through with you. And no matter where you are on the spiritual thermometer, no matter how badly who may have failed—listen to me, church—God is not finished with you. I’ll say it again for emphasis. God is not finished with you. Failure need not be final. God wants to revive, restore you and put the joy of Jesus back in your heart.

Now I want us to see some things about Simon Peter here, how Simon Peter got into this condition, because what happened is this: That Jesus said, “Simon, I’m going, to the cross.” And Peter began to boast, and he said, “Lord, I’m willing to go with You, both to prison and to death.” And Jesus said, “No, Peter, before the cock crows this morning, you will deny me three times.” Peter thought, that’s something I will never, no never do But he did. And let me tell you why. I want you to think about these things.

First of all, Peter was arguing when he should have been listening. You see, Jesus had spoken to the disciples over and over again about the coming crucifixion, about His death, and Peter, Peter wouldn’t accept it. Peter would not believe the Word of God, even as it fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can read over there in Matthew chapter 16 where the Bible says that Jesus began to speak to them about His death. And Simon Peter said, “No, that will never be.” And Jesus had to say to him, “Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offense unto me.” Peter was arguing when he should have been listening. Do you find yourself sometimes parading the Word of God before the judgment bar of your mind and looking at the Scripture? And rather than simply believing the Scripture, are you somehow put your own interpretation, your own little spin, on it and water it down?

Not only was Peter arguing when he should have been listening; he was boasting when he should have been depending. Now notice in Luke chapter 22 and verse 33: “And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, that the cock shall not crow this day before thou shalt thrice deny me.”

Here’s Peter. Peter is naturally bold and aggressive. As you, as you look at Peter in

the Bible, you can tell that's, that's the way Peter was. And Peter had confidence. And Peter had courage. It was Peter who jumped out of the boat when Jesus was there on the shore after the resurrection. It was Peter who got out of the boat to walk on water. It was Peter who this day drew a sword and went against a man named Malchus with a sword, and we'll get to that in a moment. But now, congregation, listen to me. Peter was boasting when he should have been depending.

You see, most people fail not at their point of weakness, but at their point of strength. Here was a man depending upon his strength. "Lord, I will go with you to prison and to death." You know, you study the Bible and you find out that, those saints who failed generally failed not at the point of their weakness, but at the point of their strength.

What was the strength of Abraham? His faith. And where did he fail? At the point of faith when he lied about Sarah and did some of those other things. Amazing.

What was the strength of Moses? The Bible says Moses was the meekest man who ever lived. That was his strength. But what was his failure? Moses, the meekest man that ever lived, became a murderer.

What was the strength of David? It was his integrity. And yet, that is where David fell, at the point of his integrity, and committed adultery with Bathsheba.

I wonder if there are some in this congregation today. You're a Bible student. You're faithful attendees. You're tithers. You're depending upon your ability, and you have begun to boast in your Christian life, began to look around at others and say, "Thank God, I'm not like them."

Simon Peter was arguing when he should have been listening. He was boasting when he should have been depending. And, therefore, he was sleeping when he should have been, praying. Look, if you will, in chapter 22, verse 44: "And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly—that's speaking of Jesus—and his sweat—that is, the sweat of Jesus—was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples—now listen—he found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Peter was sleeping. He should have been praying.

Now God knows we need sleep, but there's a time when sleep is inordinate. There are times in the morning when we don't get the bed off our backs in time to have a quiet time with the Lord. There are times when other pleasures come before the Lord Jesus Christ. And here is Peter asleep while Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Are you asleep? Do the things that break the heart of Jesus break yours? As Karen sang, can you say, "The cross before me, the world behind me," or can you simply yawn in the face of God? Jesus taught us to pray every morning, not only for daily bread, but

for daily protection. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” That’s what we’re to pray for. How many of you put on the armor of God every morning and say, “Dear God, in the name of Jesus, protect me and keep me?”

Peter was arguing when he should have been listening. He was boasting when he should have been depending. He was, he was, sleeping when he should have been praying. And he was fighting rather than loving and sharing.

Look, if you will, in verse 33—Peter said, “Lord, I’m ready to go with thee, both to prison and to death.” And I want to remind you that Peter failed at his strongest point. Oswald Chambers said, “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.”

Now let’s, let’s think about he was fighting. First of all, Simon Peter had the wrong enemy. Look, if you will, in verse, 50: “And one of them smote the servant of the high priest and cut up his ear, and cut off his ear.” That one was Simon Peter. Now Simon Peter was a good fisherman, but he wasn’t much of a swordfighter. And Simon Peter did not mean to cut that man’s ear off; he meant to cut off his head. But Simon Peter had the wrong enemy. You see, the Bible says that, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.”

You see, this man Malchus, who was the servant of the high priest, he was a slave. He was doing what he was told to do, what he ought to do, what he was made to do. He, himself, was a victim.

So many times, the devil loves to get flesh fighting flesh. And these people who will be demonstrating in New York City, they’re not the enemy. They are victims of the enemy. We fight not against flesh and blood. But here was Simon Peter. He was fighting. He had the wrong enemy. He had the wrong weapon. He had a sword. And Jesus had said, “Put your sword up. Put your sword back in its sheaf.” Friend, our battle is against the powers of darkness. There’s not a bullet or a bomb. There is no arsenal known to man that can overcome the powers of darkness. Only the reviving power of God. Do you believe that? I hope you believe that. He had the wrong weapon. The Bible says that, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.” What are, what are our weapons? Faith, prayer, surrender, obedience, revival. The devil cannot stand against these things.

And then he had the wrong energy. Now Peter had been asleep, and he’s wakened up out of his sleep. And there he sees the enemy there, and he goes forth to fight. He pulls his sword and begins to fight. He’s not been praying. He awakens now in the energy of the flesh. And in his flesh he’s trying to defend Jesus when Jesus wanted to defend him. Simon Peter is what we would call a religious fanatic. He is full of zeal, but misguided zeal. And the cause of Jesus Christ has been hurt more in the house of His friends than in the house of His enemies. God keep you from becoming a religious

fanatic, a zealot, going around to fight in the energy of your flesh, rather than walking in the Spirit.

And he had the wrong attitude, the wrong attitude. He was angry. But the Bible says that, “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” Now, indeed, you can have a holy indignation, and you can be moved with anger over sin, but be very, very careful that, you do not have misguided, unbridled anger. Now Peter was sure that he would not fail. He had boasted. But he did fall. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 12: “Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Now have any of these things been in your life? Have you been boasting when you ought to be depending? Have you been, have you been, friend, sleeping when you ought to be praying? Do you know why we, don't pray? Because of our boastful spirit. Now if today, listen, if today you knew that you could absolutely not make it without the power of God in your life, I will guarantee you, you would have begun today in prayer. But if you don't pray, your prayerlessness is not the worst part of it. Your prayerlessness is the indication of the pride that says, “I'm quite capable to handle this day by myself.” And so you whisper a little prayer and off you go, and then spiritually fall flat on your face.

There are three things that Peter learned about Jesus that day. When a new day dawned, as a rooster crowed, and what I want you to learn is, there can be a new day for you. God is a God of mercy. God is a God of revival. God took Simon Peter and gave him revival. As I prayed and thought about the message for this morning, I said, “Lord, we're emphasizing personal revival. Show me someone in the Bible that had personal revival that can apply to us today.” And this passage came to my mind. Here are three things that Simon Peter learned. May God write them upon your heart. May God cause them to reverberate in your soul. May God etch them upon your consciousness. What did Peter learn that day?

## **I. The Sovereign Control of Jesus**

Number one: Peter learned the sovereign control of Jesus. The sovereign control of Jesus. You say, “Peter” or, “Jesus?” Where is that? Well, look, if you will, in Luke 22, verses 60 and 61: “And Peter said, Man, I know what, not what thou sayest....” That is, a person had been accusing Simon Peter of being a follower of Jesus. Now, remember, they had arrested Jesus and carried Him away to crucify Him. And somebody said, “Why, there's one of them. There's a Galilean. There's one of His disciples.” Peter says, “Look, I don't know what you're talking about.” And then look at this: “...and immediately, while he spake, the cock crew.” Boys and girls, that means the rooster crowed. Three times. This was the third time. And while he is speaking, this rooster

begins to crow. Now, friend, that was a miracle. You think of all of the roosters in Jerusalem that night, and not a one of them crowed until the right time, and then one of them crowed at that exact moment. Friend, that's a miracle. You know, a rooster thinks the sun comes up because he crows—sort of an alarm clock with feathers on. But just at that precise moment, exactly, precisely, as Jesus said it would happen, it happened. And what did Simon Peter think at that time? The Lord is still in control. He still has complete dominion.

Psalm chapter 8, verses 6 through 8, speaking of man and the, the perfect man, the Lord Jesus, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; and hast put all things under his feet—now listen to this: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." Did Jesus have dominion over those? Did Jesus have dominion over the beasts of the field? You better believe He did when He rode a wild Syrian donkey into Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. You try riding one that's never been ridden before. Jesus did. Did Jesus have control over the fish of the sea? You better believe it. He told the fish to get away from Simon Peter, and so forth. They fished all night. Then He said, "Now, fish, come, get in the nets," and they got in the net. Jesus, when He had to pay His taxes, said to Peter, "Go down. Cast the hook into the sea. Get a fish. Open its mouth. There'll be a coin there." Jesus had control over the fish of the sea and over the fowls of the air. At this exact, precise moment, the rooster crowed.

Simon Peter thought things were getting out of hand. He was discouraged. And what caused his discouragement was doubt. He had not been listening. He had not been praying. He had not been understanding, and things were unraveling. Here was Jesus arrested. Here was Jesus led away. Here was Jesus beaten and abused. This was the Messiah. How could He be the Lord? Why doesn't He do something? And doubt led to discouragement, and discouragement led to denial.

There are some in this audience today. You've had some serious doubts. You prayed when your little girl was sick, and your little girl didn't get well; your little girl died. You asked God for a job, and you've not yet received a job. You said, "O God, bring back my wayward child," and that wayward child doesn't come back. You say, "Lord, mend my broken home," and that broken home is not mended. And you say to yourself, "It is not working out. This is not the way it's supposed to be." And that doubt leads to discouragement. I have seen people—I'm thinking of a particular lady right now—who went through sorrow. She was one of the sweetest Christian women I've known. But she went through sorrow, something she could not understand, and she dropped out completely from this church. Thank God she's come back some lately. But what happened is this: There's doubt that leads to discouragement, and discouragement

leads to denial. And what Peter needed to understand was though he could not understand why things were happening as they were that day, why he could not understand why Jesus was being amused, abused and mistreated, he learned when the rooster crowed that God is still in control. And I want to tell you something. You listen to me. I don't care what has happened in your life, how much sorrow you face, how many, seemingly, unanswered prayers that you have, God is still in control. He is still in control. Now you say, "Well, it doesn't seem like it."

I was on a ship not long ago, and I was walking south and north at the same time. You say, "It can't be done." It was. The ship was headed north, and I was walking from the front to the back of the ship. I was walking south and the ship was going north. And, friend, where did I end up, in the south? No, in the north! You see, look. Where God does not rule, He overrules. And God is moving us to His purpose.

Now Simon Peter could not understand all that was happening there that day, and that was one of the reasons he denied the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. The Sympathetic Compassion of Jesus**

Now Simon had come and Satan had come and wanted to sift Simon like wheat. I want you to notice the second point here. Not only did Peter learn the sovereign control of Jesus, and so had we better do it, but Peter learned the sympathetic compassion of Jesus. Peter learned that Jesus had never stopped loving him. He denied the Lord.

Look, if you will, in verse 61: "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the words of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." Peter, or Jesus, in unspeakable agony on the way to the cross, took time to give a look of injured love to a backslidden disciple. Jesus had never stopped loving Simon Peter. There was this sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you've heard me preach very long, many times you've heard me say often that God does not change us so He can love us. God loves us so He can change us. God loves you. I don't care what you've done. You've not crossed the deadline. Maybe you've cursed and sworn and denied the Lord Jesus Christ and turned your back on the whole thing. You wonder even why you're here this morning. But I am telling you, friend, on the authority of the Word of God, that God loves you. But now listen to me. He loves you just as you are, but He loves you too much to let you stay that way.

So Jesus said to Peter, "Now, Peter, Satan has desired you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not; and when you're converted, strengthen your brethren." The Lord kept loving and He kept praying, and the Lord never forsook Peter. And, friend, the Lord loves you today. Listen. Get this thought in

your mind. Jesus is in control. If it doesn't make sense to you, doesn't mean it doesn't make sense. And if you can't see God working, it doesn't mean that God is not working. Number two: He loves you. He has a sympathetic compassion to you, and no matter what you've done, He loves you. He loves you. He loves you. But now, remember, He loves you as you are, but He loves you too much to let you stay that way.

### **III. The Steadfast Commitment of Jesus**

Now here's the third and final thing I want you to listen, learn with me this morning. Peter learned the steadfast commitment of Jesus, the steadfast commitment of Jesus. Look in Luke 22, verse 61: "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter—now, now underscore this: And Peter remembered—Peter remembered. I have that underscored], Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt thrice, thou shalt deny me thrice."

What was it that Peter remembered? It says he remembered the Word of the Lord. Well, what was it he remembered? Look, if you will, go back to, to verse 31: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Jesus Christ had made a steadfast commitment to Simon Peter. You know what the Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 13? "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself."

Now, friend, I want you to see His control. I want you to see His compassion. And I want you to see His His commitment. He is going to see you through. If you're saved, if you're a child of God: I mean, truly born again, He will never, no never, no never, ever, ever let you go. Now how much chastisement you're going to take, that's up to you, but you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you see, Jesus said to Peter, "Peter, Satan has desired you, that he may sift you as wheat." That word desire literally means he has asked permission. You see, Satan can do nothing outside the will of God; that means nothing that God does not allow. Satan is always on a leash. Satan wanted to harm Job, but God said, "There's only so much you can do, Satan." Now here, here's Satan. He's saying, "Let me at Simon Peter. I want to sift him like wheat." The word Peter means rock. The word Simon means that which is unstable, shifty. And Jesus is using that word now. He's no longer calling him the rock, because the rock is turning to sand. And He's saying, "Peter, Satan has desired you. He's asked permission to sift you as wheat."

One of the greatest sermons I've ever heard, Ron Dunn preached right here. And Ron Dunn, in his own wonderful way, said that, Satan heard Peter boasting, saying, "Well, Lord, I'll go with you to prison and to death." And Satan said, "That braggart. I'd

like to sift him.” And Jesus says, “Sounds like a good idea to me.” Jesus agreed.

Why do you sift wheat? To get the impurities out, the sticks and the stones. Why does Satan want to do that? Satan wants to get those sticks and those stones, those sins in our lives so he can accuse us. Why does Jesus allow it? So He can cleanse us. He wants those sticks and those stones out of our lives. He wants us to be pure. And so the Lord allowed that. And, friend, I’m going to tell you, you can refuse revival if you want, but God is going to sift you. I’m talking about His steadfast commitment. That does not mean that you have an easy road. It means, to the contrary, that sometimes, with great tribulation, God is going to have to sift you and bring you to the place that you need to be. Now, remember, Satan does this that he might accuse you; Jesus, that He might cleanse you. And when you go through trouble, you need to understand this, and you need to understand the difference between satanic accusation and Holy Spirit conviction.

Satan will find sin in your life, sticks and stones, to point them out and accuse you with them. And what is the result of accusation? Accusation is despondency and, and fear and, moroseness. What is the result of conviction? Repentance, cleansing, and victory. Don’t let the devil condemn you when Jesus Christ wants to cleanse you by convicting you.

## **Conclusion**

Now, folks, Jesus prayed for Simon Peter. He was not finished with Simon Peter. He said, “Peter, Satan has desired, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith fail not.” Isn’t that a wonderful thing for those of us who are saved? The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will never, no never desert to its foes. That soul, though all hell, though all hell shall endeavor to shake. I will never, no never, no never forsake.

There is a Savior today in the glory praying for you. He wants you to have revival. And the Bible says He ever lives to make intercession for you. And if, like Simon Peter, you’ve failed; maybe not as dramatically, but you know that you’ve failed, God is a God of fresh beginnings. When that rooster crowed, a new day was dawning for Simon Peter. And there can be a new day dawning for you today, and you can see, and I trust you will, no matter all of the heartaches and tears, He’s still in control. And no matter how you fail, He still has compassion. And no matter your disobedience, His commitment is still to you. He will see you through. Now it’s really up to you, friend, whether you want revival or you want to go on being sifted.

Would you bow your heads in prayer?

Would you say, Dear Lord, revive me. Forgive my indifference, my carelessness, my

coldness, my boastfulness, my prayerlessness. Lord God, I pray in the name of Jesus that You would move in our congregation today, and, Lord, that Your dear, sweet Holy Spirit will work mightily in this congregation. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now look up here. Before we close the service this morning, we're going to have what we call a gospel invitation. What is a gospel invitation? It's a time when we invite people, who want to give their hearts to Jesus, to indicate it by coming forward and allowing us to pray with them a prayer of commitment. And if you want to be saved, become a child of God, this is your time. We're going to sing, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess you now." And I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward, and I'm trusting that many will do it. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to welcome those who will be coming will be a minister of our church to welcome you. If you're in the balcony, there'll be someone in that corner of the balcony where the banner says Redeemer, or in this corner up here where the banner says Messiah waiting to receive those of you in the balcony. You just move in that direction. And if today you will say in your heart, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, I believe He shed His blood on that cross to pay my sin debt, today, today I turn from my sin; I turn to Jesus, I'm willing to make Him Lord of my life and to follow Him the rest of my days," I want you to step out and come. You say, "Pastor Rogers, does that mean that I'm going to be perfect from this moment on?" Oh, no. You'll be a babe in Christ. You will stumble. You will fall some. There'll be much to learn. You'll need to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But, friend, you will be in the family and you will be headed for heaven just as surely as if you were already there right now. And so, if you today have a hunger in your heart for Jesus—you may be a boy or a girl, man or woman, rich or poor, married or unmarried—if you want Jesus, you just slip out and come. Don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You come if no one else comes. You try to be the first one down here.

There are others of you here today. You need a church home. Jesus wants all of us to have a, there are three homes He wants us to have: a heavenly home, a family home, and a church home. Now if you attend here, we're grateful. But God's plan is that we be committed to the local church. And God's plan is that every believer be a member of a local New Testament church. And if right now you're not a member of a local church, or if you're a member of a local church but don't attend there, you attend here, what you need to do is to come and place your membership here. I'm not looking for more members. I'm looking for commitment. I'm looking for you to say, "This is my church. That is my pastor." Not what they're doing; "What we're doing." And I want you to come and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here." And we'll tell

you just how you can do that.

Others of you today may want to say, “You know, pastor, the sermon was primarily to me. I need revival.” You know how revival begins? With God’s people on their knees and their face before God. You might want to just slip out of your seat and come down here and just kneel like these deacons did, and just pray. Say, “O God, let it begin in me.”

Father God, I pray that many will come today to say yes to Jesus. In His wonderful name. Amen.

Let’s stand together. You step out and come.

# The Dawning of a New Day

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 29, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 22:31–34**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sovereign Control of Jesus
- II. The Sympathetic Compassion of Jesus
- III. The Steadfast Commitment of Jesus

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, I hope that the cross is before you and the world is behind you because that is what revival is all about.

We're talking today about personal revival, so may I ask you a personal question? By the way, be opening your Bibles to Luke chapter 22 while I'm asking this question. Has there been a time in your life when you loved Jesus Christ more than you love Him right now? Don't answer out loud, but answer honestly. Now, friend, if there were ever a time when you loved Him more than you love Him now, to some degree, you're backslidden. To cease to be better is to cease to be good. But some don't just simply have the edge off of their devotion. There are some who have just dropped out almost. They come to church, but really feel that they have done God a favor when they come, but there's no burning, blazing, emotional, passionate love for the Lord Jesus Christ. God, to them, is a not, not a bright, blessed reality. Their prayers are brief, scattered, with no force, no faith, no expectation. They go day after day after day hardly thinking of God. They have allowed little sins in their hearts and in their lives that ought not to be there, resentments. They're watching things and listening to things that ten, fifteen years ago they would never have dreamt that they would do. Is that you? Now you don't have to answer out loud, but answer. Was there a time when you loved Jesus Christ more than you love Him now? Have you ceased to be a growing Christian? Have certain things come into your life to dumb you down to cancel your testimony, and fail to give Jesus Christ the praise? If that is so, you need revival. Now I want to talk to you about personal revival, and I asked the Lord God to give me an example of personal revival. And my mind went to this passage in, the gospel of Luke chapter 22. It's a story of the failure and the restoration of a man named Simon Peter.

Now to read the Bible, you see the story of Simon Peter. You cannot help but love Simon Peter. He loved Jesus. But Simon Peter became on one day a backslidden disciple. Now what happened was this:

Jesus is facing the cross, and Jesus tells His disciples about the fact that He's going to suffer and die. Peter steps up and he says, "Lord, I will go with you to prison and to death." Jesus said, "Peter, before the rooster crows in the morning, you will have denied me three times." Peter said, "Never, Lord, never." Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. While He prayed, He asked the disciples to pray, but they slept. Then the religious officers came in there with sticks and staves, bound Jesus, and carried Him away. And Peter, following afar off, warming himself by the enemies' fire, hoping to remain anonymous, hear somebody say, "That man is one of them." He said, "No, I'm not." Another one said, "Surely, you were one of them." Peter cursed and said, "I was not!" Then another said, "Yes, you're one of that group of Galileans." Again, while Peter was denying the third time, he heard the rooster crow.

Now there's a great lesson there for all of us here in this passage of Scripture, and I want us to learn it together.

First of all, I want you to think for a moment how Peter got into this trouble to begin with. How could a good man go so low? Well, let's think of the steps. First of all, Peter was arguing when he should have been listening. You see, Jesus, over and over again, had told the disciples about the crucifixion. They should not have been surprised. Over there in Luke chapter 16, the Bible says that Jesus began to say to the disciples how He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things at the hands of the chief priests and scribes and elders, and be crucified. I was reading that this morning. The Bible says, "And Jesus took him..." Now it doesn't say that Jesus just, looked at him. Jesus took him and said, "This shall not be under thee, Lord; no, never!" Jesus had to say, "Satan, get behind me." He knew that Satan was energizing, Peter, and He said, "For you don't savor the things that be of God, but of man. You're seeing with man's viewpoint." Do you do that? Do you look at the Bible sometimes and parade it past the judgment bar of your mind? And if God says something that displeases you, or something you can't quite explain, then you try to ignore it. And you say, "No, that's not so." Friend, when you begin to argue with the Word of God, when you begin to turn from plain and simple commandments or wonderful, glorious truths, you're setting yourself up to become, become a backslider. Most backsliders begin by failing to stay in the Word of God. Peter heard the Word of God from Jesus Christ, but he argued rather than listened.

And then, secondly, he boasted rather than depending. When Jesus said, "Look. I'm going to be crucified," Peter said, "No, sir. But if you go, I will go with you. I will go with you, both to prison and to death." Now Peter was self-confident. He begins to boast

about what he will do. He's talking about the big I. I is the middle letter in sin and pride. Peter here is full of pride and, therefore, became full of sin. 'I will go with you to prison and to death.' Peter was naturally self-confident.

You know, we sometimes tell people that they need to gain self-confidence. That's the last thing we need. We need to learn to depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ rather than self-confidence. And Peter said, "Lord, I will go with you, both to prison and to death." Now you think about it.

What was Peter's strength? His courage. Who was it that got out of the boat and walked on water? It was Simon Peter. Who was it, as we're going to see, drew out a sword and began to fight the enemies of Jesus? It was Simon Peter. Peter was naturally a man of courage. And that is where he fell.

You think of the great men of the Bible. Where did they fall—at the point of their strength? No. The ones that fell, where did they fall—at the point of their weakness? No. At the point of their strength.

What was Abraham's strength? Faith. He was the father of the faithful. How did he fail? Well, his faith failed, and he told a lie about Sarah and some other things. And here this man in the school of faith got an F. But that was his strength.

What was Moses' strength? The Bible says Moses was the meekest man that ever lived. That means a man under control. But Moses started out to become a missionary and became a murderer and killed an Egyptian. Out of the will of God. Out of the plan of God. He was not yielded to the plan of God. He failed at the point of his strength.

What was David's strength? David's strength was integrity. David has said in the Psalms, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." That is, "I will live a life of integrity." Where did David fall? At the point of integrity. He took another man's wife to be his wife. He committed manslaughter in order to cover the deed. This is David, a man after God's own heart.

Had you asked any of them, would you fail at that point, they would have said no. And there are some of you today who have begun to coast and to boast, and you don't think that you need to pray in the morning and ask God to cover you with protection, because you feel quite strong.

Peter was arguing when he should have been listening. Peter was boasting when he should have been depending. And then it's no wonder that Peter was sleeping when he should have been praying.

Now look, if you will, in the Word of God. Let's look at this passage of Scripture, Luke chapter 22, verse 44. Speaking of the prayer of Jesus, "And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he

found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” They were asleep when they should have been praying.

Now God knows we need sleep, but sleep is not more important than prayer. If you don't rise earlier enough to have a quiet time with God, then, to you, sleep is more important than prayer. "...Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

What did the Lord Jesus Christ teach us in that model prayer? How we're to pray. And part of that prayer for daily bread also was for daily deliverance. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Now the reason many of us don't pray anymore than we do pray is we're quite confident we can make it by ourselves. The worst thing about our prayerlessness is not our prayerlessness, but the pride that is behind our prayerlessness. Peter said, "Lord, I'll go with you to prison and to death.” Self-confident and then failing in prayer. If you knew that you knew that you knew you could not make it today without God's help, you would wake up and pray this morning. But you get up and go out because you're quite confident you have everything under control.

You see, he was arguing rather than listening. He was boasting rather than depending. He was sleeping rather than praying. And then he was fighting rather than loving and sharing. The Bible tells about a man who came in there, with the enemies of Jesus. His name was Malchus. Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 22, verse 50: "And one of them smote the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.” Now who was that one? It was Peter. Now Peter now wakes up. He sees all of these people coming to take off, take away Jesus. He stands up and pulls his sword, and goes toward a man whose name was Malchus. Now Peter was a good fisherman, but he was a poor sword fighter. Peter didn't mean to cut off that man's ear; he meant to cut off his head. But he whacked off the right ear of this man. And he's fighting. He's fighting, though, in the flesh. You think about what Peter was doing.

He, number one, he had the wrong enemy. Malchus was not his enemy. Malchus, himself, was a slave, a servant to the high priest. Many of those people that we're fighting, they're not the enemy. The Bible says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood..." The enemy is not the abortionist. The enemy is not sexual perversion and those who practice it. The enemy is not the slumlord. The enemy is not all of these things that we think epitomize evil. The enemy is the devil himself. And the devil loves to get us fighting flesh against flesh while he stands in the corner and grins. These people need our love. They need our compassion. They need our witness. But Simon Peter had the wrong enemy.

And Simon Peter had the wrong weapon. He took a sword. Jesus had to say to His disciples, "Put up the sword. Those that live by the sword shall die of the sword.” Now it

doesn't matter whether it's a political sword, a financial sword, or a physical sword. We're not going to win the battle with carnal weapons. The weapons, church, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal—that word carnal means fleshly—but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." The false religion, the terrorism that's in the world today is driven by an idea and a lie, and you cannot kill an idea with a bomb or a bullet. The only thing that will kill an idea is a better idea. And Simon Peter here is using the wrong weapon. Later on, on the Day of Pentecost, when he used the right weapon, the sword of the Spirit, three thousand souls came to Jesus Christ. And the Bible says, "...they were cut to their hearts." That means that Peter had a sword in his hand, which is the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword..."

But not only did Peter have the wrong enemy and the wrong weapon, but Peter had the wrong attitude. Peter was filled with anger, and so he jumps up to fight. But the Bible says that, "The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God."

Do you know one of the great dangers in this church, and any church, is that we have religious zealots, people who, have lost their direction and increased their speed. The cause of Jesus Christ has been hurt more by misguided zealots than by the enemies of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes on these talk radio stations, I'm listening while I'm driving, and they'll get on the subject of religion, and somebody from our church may call in, and I say, "O God, here it goes." And they unload, they dump. They're angry. They're venomous, vituperative. That's no witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you imagine a one-eared man, and somebody says, "What happened to you?" He says, "Some hot, hard, hot-headed Christian cut off my ear."

Now he has the wrong attitude and he has the wrong strength. He's been asleep, and he awakes from his sleep now not covered with the Holy Spirit of God, not energized by truth, but in the flesh he goes to fight for the Lord Jesus Christ, and to defend Jesus when Jesus wanted to defend him. He set himself up for backsliding: resisting the Word, missing prayer, living in the flesh, taking things into his hands, living boastfully. That speaks to many of us today, doesn't it?

But I want us to learn three truths today from this passage of Simon Peter, and I pray that God will lay these things upon your heart. Three things that Peter learned that dark night, because the day dawned that dark night. There was the dawning of a new day. And there can be the dawning of a new day for you.

## **I. The Sovereign Control of Jesus**

Look, if you will, again in Luke chapter 22, verse 60. Here is Simon Peter denying Jesus. Listen to it. "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately,

while he yet spake, the cock crew.” Boys and girls, the rooster crowed. “And the Lord, and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord; how he had said unto him, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” Now, folks, this was a miracle. It may not seem like a miracle to you, but it was a miracle. Now of all the roosters in Jerusalem, God kept them all quiet until that moment. And then, in the millisecond, while Peter had the words of denial in his mouth, that rooster began to crow. I want to ask you a question: Can you make a rooster crow? I want to ask you a question: Can you keep one from crowing? You know, the rooster thinks because it crows the sun comes up. He’s sort of an alarm clock with feather on him. This happened at that exact moment.

Now what was Peter’s problem? Everything was out of control. As long as everything was under control, everything was working right, all of the principles were in order and everything, well, Peter says, “Everything is fine.” But now Peter’s world was unraveling. It was coming apart. Jesus was supposed to be Lord, Master, Messiah, and now He’s been betrayed. He’s been bound. He’s being abused, being carried off to a false trial. It’s all coming apart. This is not the way it’s supposed to be. And Peter begins to doubt. How could this be happening? The same thing happens to some of you today. You’re living a life, faithful in church, serving God. Everything is going fine, and then things begin to unravel, things you can’t understand. You have a sick child and you pray for that child to be healed, and the child dies. You have a wayward child and you pray for that child to come back and get right with God, and the child continues in sin. You have an unfaithful husband that you’re willing to forgive and restore, but he goes away, leaves you and the children, and you stain heaven with your prayers, but it doesn’t seem to do any good. There are things that don’t make sense to you, and little formulas don’t seem to work anymore. And doubt comes in because you were arguing rather than listening in the first place. You were boasting, rather than trusting. You were sleeping rather than praying. And in your mind, these doubts begin to come, and you say, “How could this be? Where is God? What’s it all about?” And the doubt leads to discouragement, and the discouragement leads to denial. That’s where Peter was—full with doubt and discouragement and denial.

Now during all this happening, when all of this was happening, Peter was thinking everything was out of control. And then the rooster crowed and Peter remembered what Jesus said would happen. And Peter learned, and I want you to learn, that God is still in control. Say amen. If you cannot figure it out, if it’s not working out right for you, as you think it ought to be, don’t deny the Lord Jesus. He is still in control.

You know, sometimes we think that the ways of man can stop the ways of God. Friend, nothing happened that day but what God either caused it or allowed it. And

where God does not rule, God overrules.

I was on a ship not long ago. I was walking south and going north. Well, I was at the front end of the ship. The ship was headed north, and I was walking to the rear of the ship. I was walking south. But the whole time I was walking south, I was moving north. Now I might have said, "I'm going south," but God says, "You're going north." You see, God picks us up in His purposes and God brings us to the place He wants to bring us. God is in control.

I have a motto on my desk that says this: "Adrian, trust me. I have everything under control." And in these last days, when things seem to be coming apart, we had better learn one more time that God is in control. Say amen.

"Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." Have you ever thought about that; I mean, the control of the Lord Jesus? Psalm 8 says that God made man to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. Jesus had dominion over the beasts of the field. Jesus rode a donkey that no man had ever sat upon into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. You try that. Jesus, when He needed to pay taxes, said to Simon Peter, "Go put a hook in the sea, catch a fish, open its mouth, and there'll be a coin in there." Jesus in complete control of that fish. I've never been able to do when I go fishing. And now the fowls of the air. Jesus is in control. He has never, never, never, ever lost control. And there is control over you. And, friend, don't panic, don't fear if things don't seem just right to you. That's what Peter did.

## **II. The Sympathetic Compassion of Jesus**

But there's something else that Simon Peter learned. Not only did he learn the sovereign control of Jesus, but he learned the sympathetic compassion of Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 61: "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter..." Think about it. Here's Peter. He's cursed, sworn, denied the Lord Jesus. Jesus, now, being abused, handcuffed, led away, but He turns and looks upon Peter. "...And Peter remembered the word of the Lord..." What was that look that Jesus gave Peter? It was a look of injured love, a look of compassion, sympathetic compassion. Did Jesus deny Peter because Peter denied Jesus? Did Jesus stop loving Peter? If you've heard me preach very long, you've heard me say something like this: there's nothing you can do that will keep Him from loving you, and nothing you can do will make Him love you anymore. He loved you enough to go to the cross for you, "And God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I want you to remember this: God is not changing you so He can love you; God loves you so He can change you. The greatest motivation to be what we ought to be is God's sympathetic compassion no matter how much we fail.

If you're a backslider right now, I want to tell you this: God loves you, but He loves you too much to let you stay that way. Got it? He loves you, but that doesn't mean that He has, just looked slightly at your sin and winks at it. No. God's going to set about if you are backslidden, like He did Simon Peter, He's going to bring you to a time of sifting, and we'll talk about that in a moment what that sifting means. But I'm telling you that God loves you, and there's nothing, absolutely nothing that can separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And so, Simon Peter learned the sympathetic compassion of Jesus that day. There was love in that look.

### **III. The Steadfast Commitment of Jesus**

Here's the third thing he learned, and if you're a backslider, you need to learn this. He learned the steadfast commitment of Jesus. Now listen. We talk about being, committed to Jesus. When we become a child of God, Jesus commits Himself to us to care for us, to keep us. Do you think you're saved by holding onto Him? No. He holds on to you. Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 22, verse 61: "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord..." Well, what was the word of the Lord? Look, if you will, in verses 31 and 32: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Simon, Simon. The word Simon means that which is unstable. That was his first name. But then Jesus gave him the name Peter, which means rock. But now He reverts back to the first name because Simon has become unstable. He's become shifty and, therefore, sifty. And, the Lord says, "Simon, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat—but now listen to this—but I have prayed for you..." Now this is His steadfast commitment to Simon Peter.

The backslider is not lost nor can he be lost. The love of God is like a strong rubber band. He puts it around you. And you may stray off, but He'll bring you back to Him if you're truly saved. If you can live high, wide, and handsome with no conviction, no compunction, no care about sin, it's not that you're backslidden; you're lost and on the way to hell. But if you are backslidden, there is something in you—the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. There is the prayer of Jesus. There is that steadfast commitment of the Lord Jesus Christ that will keep you because He is praying for you.

Now Simon Peter didn't deserve to be kept, but the Bible says if we deny Him, the Lord, He cannot deny Himself; He abides faithful. Even if you break His word, He will keep yours. Isn't it glorious to know that Jesus Christ will see us all the way through? You know, if I depended upon what I do to get to heaven, I'd never make it. Day by day, He intercedes for me. He prayed for Simon Peter. You say, "Well, He didn't pray for

me.” Yes, He did.

You turn to John 17. Don’t do it now, but, if you want to, read it when you get home. Jesus is praying His great high, priestly prayer, and He says, “Lord, I pray for those whom thou hast given me, that, Lord, they may be with me; and, Lord, that You will keep them.” He said, “I don’t pray for the world. I pray for those that You’ve given me. And I pray, Lord, that You will keep them from the evil one.” Well, you say, “Yes, He was praying for those early disciples.” Then He, then He says in that same chapter, “I don’t just pray for these alone, but I pray for them also who will believe on me through their word.” He might as well of put my name right there because I have believed in Jesus through the words of the apostles. Thank God, He prays. And the Jesus who prayed for Simon Peter has prayed for you, that your faith fail not. He’s in control.

Now listen. “Satan has desired you, that he might sift you.” The word desire means he asked permission. Did you know that Satan cannot touch a child of God without God’s permission or your permission? If you are living right, Satan has absolutely no authority in your life, none, none, absolutely none. But if you walk away from God, Satan, therefore, has an opening. Now he’s limited. And the word desire—Satan hath desired you—means he has asked permission. And, Jesus gave that permission. Remember, He’s in sovereign control. Jesus allowed Satan to do that.

Now what do you do when you sift wheat? Well, when you sift wheat, you cause the sticks and the stones, the rocks and the debris to come to the surface. Now why does Satan want to sift you? And, brother, he will, if you’re a backslider. He wants to bring those sticks and those stones and that debris to the surface so he can point it out and accuse you before God the Father.

Now why does Jesus allow you to be sifted? Because Jesus wants those sticks and stones and debris also so He can cleanse it. And so, it’s almost as if Satan is working for Jesus. You know, David cut off Goliath’s head with Goliath’s sword. And where, as I told you, where God does not rule, He overrules. And so, God allows Peter to be sifted by Satan. And Peter found out things about himself that he did not know until he went through that sifting, that shaking, and it was a dark and bitter time for Peter to be sifted as wheat.

And the Bible says, speaks of the sorrows of backsliding. I told you, friend, that if you’re truly saved, God is committed to you. But I want to tell you something else. “Those whom He loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives.”

Satan wants to sift you to condemn you. Jesus wants you to be sifted that He might cleanse you. Satan wants to accuse you. Jesus wants to convict you. And you need to learn the difference between satanic accusation and Holy Spirit conviction. Now the devil will accuse you of sin that has not yet been confessed and repented of, and he’ll

point that out. And if it has been confessed and repented of, then he will make you feel guilty anyway. But Jesus, and he wants to lead you to despair. But Jesus will convict you, that He might cleanse you and bring you to Himself.

## Conclusion

So what did Peter learn this day? There that dark night, one of the darkest nights of Peter's life. Peter now has cursed and sworn and denied the Lord, but the rooster crowed and Peter had to remember Jesus is still in control. And if your life is unraveling, and you feel like throwing in the towel and giving it all up, I remind you one more time—He's still in control. Then Peter learned, when Jesus looked at him, He still loves me. Not only His sovereign control, but His sympathetic compassion. And then Peter learned his steadfast commitment. "Peter, I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

Friend, we've learned something in the life of Simon Peter about revival, and I hope God will speak to your heart today if some of these proclivities that were in Peter's heart are in your heart. I hope you will learn this lesson, for the Bible says if we'll judge ourselves, we'll not be judged.

Would you bow your heads in prayer.

Every head bowed and every eye closed. Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, let me speak to those of you who may not have received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. An unsaved person is not a backslider; he's never been saved. You have to be, go somewhere in order to slide back. Ha. If you have never, ever, truly received Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to do that today. And I want to guide you in a prayer, and I want you to pray this prayer fervently, but silently, if your heart, in your heart if you want to be saved. Remember at the first of the service I told you that God wants to save you and He will save you? We're going to give you an opportunity to receive Him. This is what it's all about right now. I want you to pray this prayer: "Dear God—just pray it silently—Dear God, I know that You love me—and, friend, He does love you—and I know that you want to save me—and, friend, He will save you—if I would only trust you." Friend, will you do that? The Bible says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." You need to trust Him. You're not saved by good deeds. You're not saved by joining a church, getting baptized, giving your money. You're saved by the grace of God when you ask God for mercy and trust Jesus. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Will you tell Him, therefore, right now, "Lord, I'm weak. I'm sinful. I don't have any power to live the Christian life. But, Lord, I need You. You died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus, I do right now. Thank You for saving me. And now, Lord Jesus, in obedience to You, I will make it public. Thank You, Lord, thank You. Amen."

Now look up here. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. And I'm going to ask the ministers of our church to stand across the front of this church, one at the head of each of these aisles, to be, to welcome those of you who will be coming forward. For those of you who are in the balcony, there'll be a minister under that banner over there that says Redeemer and this one up here that says Messiah. Those of you in the balcony, just make your way in that direction, and they're there to receive you. If you prayed that prayer with me and asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart, I want you to leave your seat and come to one of these ministers and say this: "I am trusting Jesus." Now the Bible teaches that when we trust Him, we're willing to make it public. And the Bible teaches if we're not willing to make it public, we're not really trusting. So walking an aisle doesn't save you, but what it indicates saves you, that you're not ashamed of Jesus Christ. "Well, Pastor, I've never done that before. What will happen if I go down there?" Well, first of all, we will rejoice. Secondly, we'll give you some Scripture to stand on. Thirdly, we'll answer any questions we can answer. And then, we'll seal it with you in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. It'll be one of the most glorious things that you've ever done.

Now there are others here today. You need a church home. You're saved, but this is not your church home, but this is where you attend. And you're always welcome as a guest, but you need to be a member. Not say, "That church," but "My church." Not, "What they're doing," but "What we're doing." God's plan is that every Christian be a member of a local New Testament church. You need church membership? I'm going to ask you to come and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here," and we'll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful church.

Now we're praying for revival. And during this invitation time there may be some of you who'll just want to come and kneel here, as our deacons did earlier, and just pray for personal revival in your own heart and in your own life, whatever the prayer burden that God is laying on your heart. You come and pray. And we'll not bother you. You can pray as you wish, get up and go back to your seat, whatever you wish to do. If you want somebody to come and pray for you, tell one of the ministers, and somebody will come alongside of you and pray. If you want to pray by yourself, that's fine.

Some are coming, I'm trusting, saying, I believe, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus." That could be you; many, I hope. Others of you are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here." And others are just coming to the altar to kneel before God.

Let's stand together as we sing.

# Gethsemane's Cup

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 13, 1994

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 22:39–47

*“And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”*

LUKE 22:41–42

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Contents of the Cup
    - A. The Pollution of Sin
    - B. The Punishment of Sin
  - II. The Consumption of the Cup
  - III. The Communion of the Cup
- Conclusion

## Introduction

To the east of the city of Jerusalem, there’s a little mountain; it’s called the Mount of Olives. It’s about three hundred feet above the city of Jerusalem—a limestone ridge about mile in length. It’s about 2,700 feet about sea level. And on the western slope of the Mount of Olives is a garden. If you go to Israel today, you can visit that garden. I have visited it many times. And in that garden there are some beautiful shrubs, primarily olive trees. As a matter of fact, eight ancient olive trees stand there. Some believe that they go back to the time of Christ. Their massive trunks are knotted, gnarled, and they stand like silent sentinels watching over that garden where Jesus came to pray. We believe that it is the exact spot. Tradition all the way back to the second century says this is the place. It’s Gethsemane. The word *Gethsemane* literally means “oil press,” because it was in this garden that they had a giant press to press the olive oil from the olives.

Jesus would often come to this place and He would kneel and pray. But this night was like no other night. Jesus had been up on Mount Zion. There in an upper room He had the Last Supper with His disciples. He talked about His coming crucifixion and, prior to that, His betrayal. And Judas had gone out away in the darkness to do that dastardly deed. Then the Lord Jesus, needing prayer, left Mount Zion and He came down and

crossed a brook. The brook was Kidron. And scholars tell us that when they would make animal sacrifices on the Temple Mount, the blood would run down into the Kidron, into that brook, and it would literally be crimson with blood. And when Jesus left that upper room and came down and crossed the valley to go up to the place, He had to cross that brook running crimson with blood. Surely it must have reminded the Lord Jesus that soon His blood would flow in that same spot on Moriah, the Temple Mount.

But Jesus came to this place. Jesus kneeled at that rock of agony and Jesus prayed. Three times Jesus prayed, “[*Lord*], *if it be possible, let this cup pass from me*” (Matthew 26:39) —“I don’t want to drink this cup.” Now He wasn’t talking about a literal cup like I hold in my hand. He was using a metaphor, a figure of speech, a symbol, meaning “to experience something fully,” “to take something into one’s very being as one would take a cup and put it to His lips.” And Jesus said, “*Father, [please,] if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*” It was the cup of agony that Jesus drank in dark Gethsemane, and He drank it there alone. Do you know, when the Lord Jesus began His ministry, when He was performing miracles, when He was feeding the multitudes, opening blinded eyes, healing withered limbs, oh, how the crowds followed Him! Oh, they loved the miracles that He did; but when Jesus Christ began to speak to them of deeper eternal verities and full surrender to His lordship, they began to leave Him. As a matter of fact, they left in droves. And the Lord Jesus had to turn to His disciples and say, “*Will ye also go away?*” (John 6:67) And from multitudes, now He just has twelve. But now one of the twelve has left. Judas has gone to betray Him. Now He only has eleven. But out of that eleven He chose a trinity of disciples to come and watch and pray with Him. Now He has three. But those three failed Him; they’re asleep. And now He goes to Gethsemane. Only Jesus the Son and God the Father are there. But in Gethsemane He knows that soon God the Father must turn His back on Him. And Jesus will drink that cup alone—alone in Gethsemane.

Take your Bibles and turn to Luke 22. Look with me in verse 39: “*And he came out, and went, as he was wont,*”—that is, “as He often did”—“*to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place...*”—you see, this was a place that Jesus often went to—“*when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*” (Luke 22:39–46) And then the story goes on to tell how Judas came and betrayed the Son of

God with a kiss. (Luke 22:47)

## I. The Contents of the Cup

I want us to think together this morning about the cup, the cup that Jesus drank in the Garden of Gethsemane. I want us to think about the contents of the cup. What was in that cup? So loathsome, so terrifying—yes, terrifying, because you’re going to see that Jesus shrank in horror from it. What was so vile, so filthy, that the very Son of God shrank back in dread? What was in Gethsemane’s cup? What was the content of that cup?

Was it physical death by crucifixion that caused such dread? Indeed, it might cause such dread, because never has a form of execution been known to man that was more ignominiously painful and hurtful and shameful than death by crucifixion. But others had died that way, and other martyrs had gone to their death not with dread, but saying, “Gladly will I fling my body in the grave for the Lord Jesus Christ.” It wasn’t physical death that He shrank back from, not even the pains of a crucifixion.

Well, was it some extraordinary attack of Satan? Is that what was in that cup? Is that what Jesus shrank back from? No, Jesus had already met Satan in the wilderness. He had already conquered Satan. Satan still hounded Him all the way to the cross. But Jesus had no fear of Satan, no dread of Satan. He said, “Now is the prince of this world cast out. Now is the judgment of this world.” (John 12:31)

What was it that was breaking the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ? Was it the betrayal of Judas? Was it the failure of the disciples? Yes, He was disappointed. But there’s a difference in disappointment and dread. What was it that caused Jesus to dread the drinking of that cup? What was in that cup?

### A. The Pollution of Sin

The pollution of sin was in that cup. You see, the Bible says that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, and yet He was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15) The Bible tells us that in Hebrews the fourth chapter and the fifteenth verse. But the Bible also teaches us that in order for Him to redeem us, our sin had to be placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21 says that God “*hath made him*”—Jesus—“*to be sin for us...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*” (2 Corinthians 5:21) Do you know what was in that cup? The sin of the ages was in that cup. My sin and your sin was in that cup.

Suppose we were to go through this congregation this morning and put your sin in it, and yours, and yours—put it right in there. Not some of your sin, all of your sin—every vile thought; every wicked deed; every hurtful, hateful thing; all of the sin of this congregation; and then the sin of this city; and then the sin of

this nation; and then the sin of this world. Now, put it in the cup and take all the sins of the past and all of the sins of the future, distill it, put it in this cup. Put rape in there. Put sodomy in there. Put child abuse in there. Put Hitler's gas ovens in there. Put murder in there. Put blasphemy in there. Put witchcraft in there. Put filth in there. And say, "Jesus, drink it. Drink it. Drink the bitter dregs. Become sin; not just bear sin, but become sin." I didn't say He sinned. He never sinned. But He was "*made to be sin for us,*" because He carried that sin to the cross. You may not understand what sin is, but I can tell you Jesus Christ knew what sin is. Jesus had seen sin turn angels to demons and men to beasts. Sin is a clenched fist in the face of God. And Jesus knew when He drank that cup He would be numbered with the transgressors, (Isaiah 53:12; Mark 15:28) and Him whose name is holy, who is the complete other, the antithesis of sin, would become sin.

### **B. The Punishment of Sin**

The pollution of sin was in that cup. But wait a minute. Not only was the pollution of sin in that cup; friend, with the pollution of sin, the punishment of sin was in that cup. Jesus knew that the punishment not of some sin, but of all sin; not of some people, but all people, would be upon Him. One man, the God-man, would bear it all. And when He did, God the Father would have to treat Him as if He had committed the sins of all the people and all of the sins of all of the people. That's the reason why the Bible says in Romans chapter 8 and verse 32 that God "*spared not his own Son.*" (Romans 8:32) The Bible says in Isaiah 53 and verse 10, "*It pleased the Lord to bruise him.*" (Isaiah 53:10) When Jesus took my sin and your sin, God the Father in justice had to treat Him as He would treat me, as He would treat you. And Jesus knew that He was going to suffer the very fires of hell. The pains of hell were getting hold of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus was going to baptize His soul in hell. Jesus was going to walk the burning corridors of the damned. Jesus was going to receive the thunderbolts of God's wrath, and Jesus Christ, the eternal Son who had been in the bosom of the Father from eternity, was going to be now separated from God on that cross. He was going to cry out, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) And the answer is that God is "*of purer eyes than to behold evil.*" (Habakkuk 1:13) And God the Father had to turn His back on God the Son.

I've told you before—and you listen well—that at the cross, the sins of the world were distilled and the eternities were compressed. And Jesus, being infinite, bore in a finite period of time what we, being finite, would bear in an infinite period of time. I'm telling you that Jesus Christ suffered an eternity of hell on that cross. The price that Jesus paid, only the damned in hell can begin to know; but they'll never know, because they're only paying their sin. He paid all of the sin of all of the people for all time. And, friend, if that doesn't move your heart, your heart is harder than a rock. That is the content of that cup. No wonder Jesus said, "*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass*

from me.” (Matthew 26:39)

## II. The Consumption of the Cup

But I want you to notice not only the content of that cup; I want you to notice the consumption of that cup. The Lord Jesus drank it to the bitter dregs. Did He shrink back? Yes, He shrank back. Does that make you think less of Him? It makes me think more of Him. And I'll tell you why. This was not some charade; this was real. If you don't understand why He shrank back, you don't know what was in there. In His humanity and in His holiness, seeing the vileness and the filth of sin, He said, “O God, if there be some other way...” And silence from heaven said, “There is no other way.” So in His holy humanity, He shrank back. But in His divine love, He said, “*Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*” (Luke 22:42)

You see, He paid a price. You will never know the agony that the Son of God endured there on the cross. He didn't have to die; He had a choice. Jesus Christ said, “No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself.” (John 10:18) Jesus was the only man who ever chose to die. “*The wages of sin is death.*” (Romans 6:23) There was no sin in Him. There would have been no death in Him. You say, “Well, a suicide chooses to die.” No, He doesn't. He just chooses to die a little sooner. “*It is appointed unto men once to die.*” (Hebrews 9:27) Jesus was the only man who could say, “No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself.”

And Jesus said, “*Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*” If you'll read Isaiah chapter 14, you'll see that Satan became Satan when He said, “*I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.*” (Isaiah 14:13) And Satan said this to God the Father: “Not your will, but mine be done.” But Jesus said, though He was very God, to very God, in His humanity, “*Not my will, but thine, be done.*” Adam, following Satan in the Garden of Eden, said, “Not thy will, but mine,” and ruined the race. Jesus, in another garden, the last Adam, said, “*Not my will, but thine,*” and redeemed the race. That's the consumption of the cup. The Lord Jesus willingly, voluntarily, vicariously, victoriously said, “*Not my will, but thine.*” Had He said *no*, every one of us would have burned in hell forever. Had He said *no*, all of those who had already gone to the place of redemption where Jesus had promised to pay would have to come out and go to hell. But Jesus said, “*Not my will, but thine, be done.*” It was because Jesus suffered, bled, and died on that cross that you and I can be redeemed—because Jesus took my sin, your sin, and carried it to the cross.

Now, look up here at me. I want you to get this in your heart, and I don't want you to miss it. God will never overlook sin. He cannot. God is holy, and by His holiness He has sworn that sin will be punished. All sin is punished. No sin goes unpunished. If God were to let one half of one sin go unpunished, God would no longer be holy. The chief

attribute of God is not love; it is holiness. His infinite, measureless, spotlessness is His holiness, and God must punish sin. I say, if He did not punish sin, He would topple from His throne of holiness. The cross is God's way to punish sin and forgive the sinner at the same time—and that is by having an innocent, sinless sin-bearer to take that sin and carry it to the cross. "Him who knew no sin," God said, "God has made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

### III. The Communion of the Cup

Now there is another cup that we drink. We drink that. That's the Lord's Supper. Don't you enjoy the Lord's Supper? You see, just before Jesus went into Gethsemane, in this same twenty-second chapter of the book of Luke, it tells how He was there with that Last Supper with His disciples, and He told them, "*This...is the new testament in my blood,*" (Luke 22:20) "drink it," because, you see, He drank the cup of sin that we might have the cup of redemption. And so there is the content of that cup. There is the consumption of that cup. But, thank God, there is the communion of that cup. Thank God because He drank this cup, we drink that cup. We drink the cup of communion because I meet Jesus here. He takes my sin. He drinks it down. I take His righteousness. I drink it in. Isn't that wonderful? Say *amen*. That's wonderful.

God forbid that we should fail to be moved by Gethsemane. When you think of the words that are used there in all of the Gospels to talk about what the Lord Jesus Christ bore! He said, "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.*" (Matthew 26:38) Had not an angel come to minister to Him, He would have died there. I mean, He was dying. When He was perspiring, the sweat was like blood; it was blood. The minute capillaries had ruptured. He was in such extreme duress that blood was dripping from His brow. Sometimes Jesus would pray standing. Sometimes Jesus would lift His face to heaven to pray. Sometimes Jesus would kneel and pray. But in Gethsemane, He fell on His face. Can you imagine what He must have looked like when Judas led that group into the garden? Can you see Him? His face is matted with blood and dirt—red blood and black dirt on His face. His heart is broken. This is the way they found Him when Judas planted that kiss of shame upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

He said, "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful.*" The word *sorrowful* has the idea of being separated, alone. Before those nails ever went into the hands of Jesus, they had already come into His soul. Gethsemane was the vestibule of Calvary. The victory really was won in Gethsemane, not on Calvary. It was paid for at Calvary. It was won in Gethsemane—Jesus knowing what He would go through. There's another word that Jesus used when He said "*exceeding sorrowful,*" and that word *exceeding* has the idea of being surrounded with no way out, no escape, no hope; absolute, abject suffering. And Jesus paid that for me and for you.

But in our text Jesus spoke of His agony. Do you know what the *agony* means—why they call that place where He prayed “the rock of agony”? The *agony* was an athletic contest in Greek. It was a wrestling match. Jesus was wrestling. He was in agony. There was a wrestling, a contest. Was He wrestling with God the Father? No, never. The great desire of His heart was to please the Father. Was He wrestling with Satan? He never needed to. He had absolute authority over Satan. Who was He wrestling with? With Himself. There was His holy humanity, and there was His divine love. And there was that contest; there was that wrestling. And I’m glad that His love won. Aren’t you? I’m glad. I’m glad that love paid the price in dark Gethsemane.

## Conclusion

There is a story that comes down to us through the ages. It has been told so many times that it must be rooted in history. It is said that Nero had forty men in his army. These forty men were wrestlers. They were Nero’s wrestlers, gladiators who would come there to the field of endeavor, to the agony, to wrestle for Nero, and they wanted to please their emperor. And as these forty wrestlers would come there to wrestle before the emperor, the emperor would sit there in his finery, in his velvet box, draped, sit there upon his throne and watch the games, as these wrestlers would wrestle. They were the finest athletes in all of Rome. They would come out there with their square shoulders and bulging biceps, look up into the box of their emperor, and they would chant, “We are forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Emperor, to win for thee the victory and for thee the victor’s crown.” Everybody in the empire knew who these wrestlers were. They were the counterpart of our Olympic champions today.

Then word came to Nero that some in the army had become Christians. Christianity was beginning to spread. To be a Christian now was a crime worthy of death. Christians must be put to death by fire, by sword, by beast. And so Nero sent out a word to his commander-in-chief, Vespasian, and said, “You need to go through the ranks of your troops. If you find any Christians, they shall be executed.” Vespasian lined his troops up and he said, “An edict has come from the emperor: Should there be any Christians, I’m going to ask you to confess to being Christians. And I am told that a Christian will never deny that he’s a Christian. But I want to say before you confess that you are a Christian, if you do this, you will surely be put to death.” Then Vespasian said, “Are there any Christians?” He wasn’t prepared for what was about to happen, because as one man, forty stepped forward. All forty of these wrestlers had given their hearts, their lives, to Jesus Christ.

When Vespasian saw that, he said, “No! No! There is some mistake. Not your forty.” To a man they said, “We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Vespasian said, “Please step back, renounce your faith, and it will be over.” Not a one of them moved.

Vespasian said, “I cannot put you to death with a sword. I believe you have not thought it through. Surely you will renounce your faith.” He said, “I have a plan.” It was in the middle of winter. Vespasian built a fire on a frozen lake, a big roaring fire, then he took from those forty men their helmet, their breastplate, their greaves of brass, their shoes, their shirt, their undergarments, stripped them down to absolutely nothing in that subzero weather, and turned them away in the darkness and said, “You will stay out in the darkness until you freeze. But if any of you out there in the cold and the darkness decide that you want to renounce Christ, all you have to do is come to the fire.” Thinking they would surely come to the fire, Vespasian sent them out there, and the forty men went out there. But he wasn’t prepared for what he was about to hear—because he heard the chant that he had heard so many times, but now it was different. And this was what they were chanting: “We are forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ, to win for thee the victory and for thee the victor’s crown.”

Vespasian said, “Well, they’re chanting now, but they will soon change.” But on through the night, as the cold grew deeper, he heard this chant: “Forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ; forty wrestlers for thee, O Christ, to win for thee the victory and for thee the victor’s crown.” It grew weaker and weaker and weaker. They were being numbed by the cold. But then the chanting stopped. And Vespasian looked and there slithering across the ice was the naked form of one of those soldiers turning his back on Jesus Christ, coming to the fire. Vespasian said, “Here he comes. The rest will soon follow. I knew it. I know men. The others will be coming soon.”

But he wasn’t prepared for what he was about to hear. He listened, and he heard in the darkness, “Thirty-nine wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ, to win for thee the victory and for thee the victor’s crown.” When Vespasian said that, he looked at the miserable form before him slithering on the ice. According to the story the way I heard it, Vespasian took from his head his helmet, took from his chest his armor, took from his back his shirt, from his feet his shoes, and ran toward the thirty-nine saying, “Forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ, to win for thee the victory and for thee the victor’s crown.”

Jesus wrestled for me. I want to wrestle for Him. Don’t you? Am I a soldier of the cross? I want to be. As I look at dark Gethsemane, I’ll tell you there are two things that tells me. Number one: I want to hate sin. Number two: I want to love Jesus Christ. And so should every one of us.†

# The Dawning of a New Day

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 28, 1984**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 22:54–62**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Christ of Sovereignty

II. The Christ of Sympathy

III. The Christ of Security

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles today and turn to Luke 22. In just a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 54. Luke 22—we'll begin reading in verse 54. But before we begin to read, I want to ask you a question: What would you do if you had a pastor that cursed and swore in front of a teenage girl? What would you do with him? You say, "Well, I'd be finished with him." Well, there was a pastor who did that. His name was Simon Peter. And, thank God, God wasn't finished with him.

You're going to find the story right here in Luke 22—I begin in verse 54. The theme is right after Jesus has been betrayed by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane—I begin in reading in verse 54: *"Then took they him,"*—that is, the soldiers took Jesus—*"and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him,"*—that is, Peter denied Jesus—*"saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaeen. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew."* Now, boys and girls, that means the rooster crowed. *"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."* (Luke 22:54–62)

Now we all, I suppose, are familiar with the crowing of the rooster. And these roosters are alarm clocks with feathers on them. Or we might say that your alarm clock

is an electronic rooster. And God has just ordained, I suppose, that the roosters are the ones that welcome the morning. And I think all of us enjoy going to the farm and hearing the rooster crow early in the morning. I like to hear a rooster crow. It sounds like he thinks that his crowing causes the sun to come up in the morning. And so proudly does the rooster crow.

Do you think it is by accident that the Holy Spirit transcribed this for us, or that the Lord mentioned the crowing of the rooster in conjunction with Peter's sin? I think not at all. As a matter of fact, I think there's a wonderful, wonderful lesson that this rooster has for us, and I want to call it the revelation of a rooster. Not only was it a revelry; it was a revelation as this rooster crowed, because it was the dawning of a new day. You see, Peter had failed, and he failed horribly, and he failed terribly. He had been through a dark night of despair. He'd been through a dark night of warfare. He'd been through a dark night of doubt. He'd been through a dark night of disobedience. He had failed the dear Lord. But then a rooster crowed. It was the dawning of a new day.

Now I want us to apply this to our hearts and to our lives, because I want to remind you that Peter was quite certain he would not fail. Remember Jesus said, "Peter, Satan has desired you that he might sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." And then, look, if you will, in verse 33. I want you to see Peter's answer to Jesus' warning. Peter said, "*Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.*" (Luke 22:33) "Now, just save your prayers, Lord. You don't have to pray for me. I'm quite confident. Now, Lord, I know that the devil may be after me, but I want you to know there's one thing that you can count on—and that is me." He was so certain that he was going to be fine. "Lord, I'm going with you to prison. Lord, if they kill you, well, they'll just have to kill me too. Lord, I'm going with you to prison and to death."

And I want to tell you, Peter was sincere. Peter loved the Lord. He really thought he understood his own heart. Do you know what the Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9? "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*" Now, that's not only Peter's heart; that's your heart. You see, I think many of you today say, "Well, if I know my heart, I would never do such a thing." Well, you don't know your heart. You don't know your heart. There's not a one of us that knows his heart, for the heart is a *Jacob*. That's what the word *deceitful* literally means: it is a translation of *Jacob*. The heart is a conniver. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9) Who can understand his own heart?

You see, many of us don't think we're going to fail. Peter didn't think he was going to fail. And I'll tell you why Peter didn't think he was going to fail, especially in this area: because if Peter had any strength, it was courage—courage! I mean, this was Peter's strong point. Who was it that got out of the boat and walked on water? Peter! Who was

it that took out his sword when they came after Jesus and was willing to fight the whole bunch single-handedly? It was Simon Peter. I want you to see something. Peter did not fail at the point of his weakness; he failed at the point of his strength.

Now, you see, many of us don't understand that many times it's not in our weakness where we're going to fail, but at our strength. And that's true if you study the history of the Bible characters. Abraham—what was Abraham's strength? His faith. He was the father of the faithful. Where did Abraham fail? His faith—when he got down there in Egypt. And rather than trusting the Lord, he told a lie to get him out of a situation. And he failed in the area of his faith. What was David's great strength? David's great strength was what? His integrity. He was a man after God's own heart. Where did David fail? In the area of his integrity. And he committed adultery and failed to keep his vows and his holy vows. Moses—what was Moses' great strength? His meekness. He was the meekest man who ever lived. Where did Moses fail? He failed in following the Lord, and disobeyed the Lord and struck the rock rather than speaking to the rock. And at the point of his meekness, which was his great strength, his meekness became his weakness.

A strange thing: Here was Peter that failed at the point of his greatest strength. That ought to be a warning to every one of us here today. I mean, we're sitting here and saying, "Well, I'm not going to fail the Lord. I never would curse and deny and swear. At least, I'm strong in this area." The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*" (1 Corinthians 10:12) And I'll tell you, what happened to Simon Peter ought to be a warning to every one of us here today. You don't love God more than Simon Peter loved God. You're no stronger than Simon Peter was. And if you depend upon the flesh, as Simon Peter depended upon the flesh, you too are going to fail.

You see, the arrogant man, the self-sufficient man, tempts the devil to tempt him. Now, the devil, when he heard Peter speak these words, said, "Hey, there's a place where I can get in." You see, Jesus said, "Satan has desired you, Peter, that he might sift you as wheat." The devil is always looking for a place to get in. And, you know, the devil, he's so dirty. He's so deceptive. He's so devious. I mean, do you know what he does? Here's the way he gets us into sin. Before we sin, he says, "Oh, go ahead: you can get away with it"—"go ahead: you can get away with it." And after we sin, he says, "You'll never get away with it"—"you'll never get away with it." You know, it's amazing, isn't it? First of all, he comes to us as the tempter, "Go ahead and do it." And then after we do it, he comes to us as the accuser. You see, either on the one hand he's going to tempt us to get us into sin, or, after we get into sin, he's going to accuse us about the sin. He'll tell us we can get away with it till we've done it. And then, after we do it, he'll

tell us we can never get away with it.

Well, Peter, in his arrogance, and Peter, with the help of the devil—because the devil had desired him that he might sift him as wheat—Peter cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus Christ three times. And then at the exact, precise moment, while the words were still in Peter’s mouth, while Peter was denying the Lord, the rooster crowed exactly, precisely, as Jesus has prophesied. And, folks, that was a miracle—a miracle. Can you imagine all of the roosters in Jerusalem keeping silent until that exact moment? And then at that exact, precise moment, when the words were still in Simon Peter’s mouth, while he had just completed those words, the cock crowed.

Look in verse 60: *“And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately,”*—just underscore the word *immediately*—*“while he yet spake, the cock crew.”* (Luke 22:60) It was a miracle. And I think it was a miracle with a message. It was a revelation from a rooster. God was showing Peter, “Peter, you failed. It’s been a long, dark night of failure and disappointment and disobedience and disillusionment. But, Peter, there is a new day dawning.” And this rooster told Peter three things that I believe he wants to tell you today: three things about the Lord Jesus, and three things that are true when we fail. Thank God, three things that I pray that every time you hear a rooster crow from now on you will remember. These three things are three things about Jesus that we learn from the crowing of that rooster.

## **I. The Christ of Sovereignty**

All right, number one: Christ is the Christ of sovereignty—sovereignty. You say, “Pastor, what does that word *sovereignty* mean?” It means He’s Lord—He is Lord. A sovereign is a king—a king, one who rules. And, you see, what the crowing of that rooster showed was that Jesus Christ was sovereign. You say, “How did it show that?” Well, I’ll tell you. You see, Jesus didn’t look very sovereign right then. As a matter of fact, that’s why Peter got in trouble. Peter thought that Jesus was Lord; He was King; He was Master. He was the One who was going to deliver Israel. And Peter had put everything he had into that basket, following the Lord Jesus Christ. And now he sees Jesus. Why, Jesus is betrayed by Judas. And Jesus is arrested. And Jesus is led away. And Jesus is falsely accused. And He’s being judged. And He’s being buffeted. And He’s been pushed around here and there. And everything seems to be falling apart in front of Peter’s eyes. His house of hope, it comes crumbling down. And Peter is confused. And confusion causes doubt. And doubt causes fear. And fear caused denial. He had lost sight of the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But then, at the exact, precise moment, a rooster crowed exactly as Jesus said it would happen. I mean, the timing was absolutely perfect. And Peter knew He was still in

control. It was exactly as He said it would be. “Oh, why didn’t I trust Him? When am I going to learn to believe Him, that He’s not lost control?” “No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself,” (John 10:18) the Lord Jesus said.

He, dear friend, is the sovereign. Remember when God created man there in the Garden of Eden and God gave to man dominion? That was King Adam I and Queen Eve I there in the Garden of Eden. And God said, “Let us make man, and let them have dominion,” and God gave man dominion over the beasts of the field, over the fowls of the air, and over the fish of the sea. (Genesis 1:26) You can read about it there in the eighth psalm, that man lost his dominion, but the Lord Jesus there was exercising the dominion that Adam should have had.

You see, Jesus had dominion over the beasts of the field. When He was fasting, what did He do? The Bible says He was out there forty days and forty nights with the wild beasts. They didn’t bother Him. He had dominion over them. When He got ready for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He rode upon a wild Syrian donkey where never a man had ridden. You try riding one sometime and see what happens to you. It will be the only time you’ll try it. But Jesus rode that donkey into Jerusalem. Nobody else had ever ridden that donkey. He was yet unbroken. He had dominion over the beasts of the field.

He had dominion over the fish of the sea. He said to Peter, “Peter, cast your net on the other side,” and Peter caught 153 fish. The nets almost broke. One hundred and fifty-three, because there was an educational director there that counted them—153 fish! And Jesus had control over the fish of the sea. When He wanted to pay His taxes, He said to Peter, “Go, put your line in the water, and you’ll catch a fish, and he’ll have a coin in his mouth.” And Jesus guided that fish like a guided missile to that coin that perhaps had fallen out of a fisherman’s pocket; and that fish put that coin in his mouth, and then that fish went to that one hook in all of the Sea of Galilee that the Lord wanted it to go to. He had dominion over the fish of the sea.

And He also had dominion over the fowls of the air. And the Lord Jesus Christ, who was in control, saw to it that not another rooster that day crowed until His precise rooster crowed at that exact moment.

Now, friend, in the midst of your fears, and in the midst of your frustrations, and in the midst of your failures, I want you to remember what a rooster has to tell you this morning. Jesus is still in control. Are you hearing me? Jesus is still in control. And you know how you’re going to get in trouble if you’re not careful? You’re going to get in trouble exactly the same way that Simon Peter got in trouble. You’re going to get your eyes on circumstances rather than on the promises of God. And when you start looking at circumstances, and when you start looking at appearances, you’re going to say, “He’s

not in control. Everything is coming apart. Everything is unraveling.” But God is on His throne. He cannot fail. And He’s able to arch the rainbow of hope and write Romans 8:28 over every problem that you have: that “All things work together for good to those who love God, whom are the called, according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28) He is the sovereign Christ. He is the Christ of sovereignty. And I want you to understand that this morning.

## II. The Christ of Sympathy

That’s one thing that a rooster can tell us today. That’s a revelation from a rooster. He is the Christ of sovereignty. Second thing: Not only is He the Christ of sovereignty; He’s also the Christ of sympathy—He’s the Christ of sympathy. Look again, if you will, in verse 60: “*And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.*” (Luke 22:60–61) Oh, I’m so glad that’s there! The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. What kind of a look was it? Was it a look of condemnation? Was it a look of irritation? No! It was a look of injured love. It was a look that had so much love and compassion in it that it literally broke the heart of Simon Peter. The Bible says that as a result of that Simon Peter went out and wept bitterly. When Jesus gave that look to Simon Peter, coincidentally and immediately, simultaneously with the crowing of the rooster, it was Jesus’ way of saying, “Simon, I knew this was going to happen to you. But remember, Simon Peter, I’ve not stopped loving you.” And here was the Lord Jesus Christ on His way to the cross, who took time out to give a reassuring look to a backslidden disciple, still concerned about Simon Peter.

Now I want to tell you something that’s profound. And I’ve told you before, but I want to tell you again. Perhaps you’ve forgotten it, or perhaps you’ve never heard it. But if you have not heard anything else I’ll say today, I want you to hear this, especially if you’re a failure or you have failed the Lord and disobeyed the Lord. *God does not change us so He can love us; He loves us so He can change us.* Do you understand? I mean, He loves us, and by His love He changes us. So many of us are trying to make ourselves acceptable to Him so He’ll love us.

You see, Peter was surprised that he sinned. Peter did not believe that he would do that. But Jesus believed that he would do that. Jesus knew that he would do that. Jesus knew that Simon Peter was trusting in the flesh. And, dear friend, Jesus did not come to improve the flesh; He came to replace the flesh and that old self-life. And Simon Peter was depending upon Simon Peter, and Jesus knew that. But Jesus still loved him. He said, “Peter, you’re going to deny me, but I’ve prayed for you. Peter, I still care for you. Peter, I still love you.”

And your sin cannot stop Him from loving you. And your failure has not stopped Him from loving you. And perhaps you've denied Him, perhaps you've failed Him, perhaps you've disobeyed Him, and perhaps you've been in the dark night of disobedience: He loves you! A rooster tells you that. The crowing of that rooster tells us He's the Christ of sympathy. He looks at you today with a look of compassion and a look of love that says that failure is not final. You can be forgiven. You can be restored. "And when you are restored—when you're turned around—strengthen your brethren. You, Peter, because of my love, can become a tower of strength." (Luke 22:32)

### III. The Christ of Security

The crowing of the rooster tells us that He's the Christ of sovereignty. The crowing of that rooster tells us He's the Christ of sympathy: He still loved Peter in spite of his failure. One other thing: The crowing of that rooster tells us He's the Christ of security—the Christ of security. Look, if you will again, in verse 60: "*And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord.*" (Luke 22:60)

Now, what was the word of the Lord? Well, go back to verse 31, and here's what the Lord had said to him: "*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*" (Luke 22:31–32) That is, "Simon, you're going to be sifted. You're going to have trouble. You're going to have difficulty. You're going to fail. But, Simon, I want you to remember this: that I have prayed for you."

Now, you see, there were two who were interested in Simon's sin that day: one was Satan; the other was the Savior. Satan was interested in Simon's sin because Satan was there to sift Simon. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired you, that he might sift you." Now, Jesus used the word *Simon*. That's Peter's old name. That speaks of the old man, the old nature. "Simon, Peter, Satan has desired you, that he might sift you." Do you know how to sift something? You take something like grain, and you take a sieve or a wire mesh, and you pour the grain over, and all that is left is the straw, the impurity, and the grain goes on through. Now, that's what the devil wanted to do with Simon Peter. He wanted to sift Simon Peter. Why? So he could find all the impurities, all the filth, all the trash in Simon Peter's life. And after he had sifted Simon Peter, and after that residue remained, the devil, who is the accuser of the brethren, wanted to use that to condemn and accuse Simon Peter.

The devil wants to point out your sin that he might accuse you. Do you know what

he's doing today? He's just screening the saints, just trying to find some flaw, some fault in you, that he might sift you, that he might accuse you. But Jesus also is interested in your sin, not that He might accuse you, but that He might convict you, that He might cleanse you, that He might secure you, that He might keep you.

Now, here's something. Listen, folks. You're getting ready for a blessing if you're paying attention. Look in verse 31: "*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan...*"—now, just underscore that—"*behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.*" But now, notice verse 32: "*But I have prayed for thee.*" Now in your Bible, just underscore the one phrase, "*behold, Satan,*" and then, underscore the second phrase, "*but I,*" and tell me if that doesn't give you a blessing. You see, this is a perfect illustration of that text, "*Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" (1 John 4:4) "The devil has desired you...but I have prayed for you." Here the security of the saints is in the prayer of the Savior. Satan has power, but Jesus has greater power. Satan desires us, but Jesus intercedes for us. He prays for us. "Behold, Satan...but I have prayed for you." And "*greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

You know, some people don't believe in eternal security. You quote to them John 10:27–28—Jesus said, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*" (John 10:27–28) Someone says, "Oh, yes, no *man* can pluck you out, but the devil could take you out." That's the way they want to argue with the Scripture. Well, literally, the Scripture says, "neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." It doesn't say "*any man*" in the original; it just says "neither shall any." But suppose the devil could take you out. I mean, just suppose he could. Well, friend, be reasonable. If he could, he would, wouldn't he? I mean, if he could, he would. So suppose he hasn't taken you out yet. Hasn't he been good to you? I mean, if he could, he would. Wouldn't that be a strange doctrine: you going to heaven by the goodness of the devil? You see, listen—listen. The only reason he hasn't is because he can't. "Behold, Satan...but I have prayed for you."

Oh, friend, we need to understand the intercessory prayers of the saints. That's what the crowing of that rooster reminded Peter of. And I pray God it will remind you of the same thing. In spite of your failure, He is the Christ of security. And why is He is the Christ of security? Because He's the Christ of sovereignty and He's the Christ of sympathy, He's able to do all things and He loves you. And because He's able to do all things and because He loves you, He is the Christ of security. He is the Savior who prays for you.

Well, you say, "Now, wait a minute. It says He prayed for Peter. It doesn't say He

prayed for me.” Well, I’m glad you brought that up. I want you to turn to John 17 with me for just a moment and let me show you something now that is going to just really bless your heart. Turn with me, if you will, to John 17, and let’s look in verse 9. Jesus is praying His intercessory, high-priestly prayer, and He says, *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”* (John 17:9)

Now, folks, Jesus is not up in heaven praying for the world. Contrary to popular opinion, He’s not praying for the lost; He’s praying for the saved. “I pray not for the world, but I pray for them that you have given me; for they are thine.” And what does Jesus pray for them? Look in verse 15: *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”* (John 17:15) Jesus is praying for our security, not that we’ll be kept out of the world, not that we’ll be kept from trouble and disappointment and temptation. All of that is a part of His plan to help grow us and mature us.

“Well,” you say, “yes, that’s for those folks back yonder. He prayed for Peter, James, and John, and the rest of them.” But now, skip down to verse 20: *“Neither pray I for these alone...”*—there are His disciples in front of Him, and He prays, “Lord, keep them. And, Father, take care of them.” But now, notice verse 20—*“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”* (John 17:20) He looked down through the tunnel of time, and there’s Jim Whitmire. He says, “Lord, Satan wants Jim Whitmire. He wants to sift Jim Whitmire. He wants to bring out his faults and his failures and the trash and so forth that comes into his life. He wants to sift Adrian.” He wants to sift all of us. “But I’m praying, Father. I’m praying for Phil. I’m praying for Adrian. I’m praying for Buck. I’m praying for Jim. I’m praying for the orchestra. I’m praying for the choir. I’m praying for Bellevue. Father, I’m praying for them.”

Now I want to ask you a question: Did Jesus ever pray a prayer that was not answered? Never! Jesus said, when He prayed to the Father, “Father, I thank you that you always hear me.” (John 11:41–42) You see, if Jesus had been praying a prayer that had not been answered, what would that have meant? It would have meant He was out of the will of God. *“This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”* (1 John 5:14) Do you think the Savior ever got out of the will of God? If Jesus had prayed a prayer that wasn’t answered, it would have meant that Jesus did not have faith. And *“whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”* (Romans 14:23) That would have meant that Jesus was a sinner, because the Bible says, *“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* (Mark 11:24) You’ll never convince me that Jesus ever prayed a prayer that was not answered.

And what did Jesus pray? He prayed for His own, that we would be kept, just as He prayed for Simon Peter. And you know what Jesus is doing now right this moment? Hebrews 7:25 says, *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost”*—that means all the way to the end; He’s able to save to the very end—*“that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”* (Hebrews 7:25) Jesus Christ right now is interceding for us.

Say, if you knew that Jesus Christ was in the next room praying for you, what would that do for you? I mean, if you knew that in the next room—or perhaps as I’m preaching, if I knew right outside that door Jesus was down on His knees saying, “Father, bless Adrian and help him,” how do you think that would help me preach? Well, dear friend, let me tell you, He is praying for me—not there, but in heaven, just as real. The Savior is praying for me. The Bible says, “He ever lives to make intercession for us.” On the cross, that was His finished work; but on the throne of intercession, that is His unfinished work. Thank God for His unfinished work, as well as His finished work. “He ever lives to make intercession for us.” And just as the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for Simon Peter, “Simon, Satan has desired you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you,” in the same way—hallelujah, praise God, in the same way—the Savior prays for me. He prays for you today.

## Conclusion

Oh, He is the Christ—He is the Christ of security.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.

—ROBERT KEEN

He is the Christ of sovereignty, folks. He’s still in control in spite of your failure.

# The Dawning of a New Day

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 23, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 22:54–62**

*“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”*

LUKE 22:61

## Outline

Introduction

- I. He Is the Christ of Sovereignty
- II. He Is the Christ of Sympathy
- III. He Is the Christ of Security

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now would you take God's Word and be finding Luke chapter 22, and as these are finding their place, the choir members, you just be finding your place in the Word of God. We're going to have a wonderful Bible study today, thinking about what it means to have a brand new start. I want to ask you a question while you're looking in Luke chapter 22: what would you think of a preacher, a minister, a man who is well-known, a leader, who would curse and swear in front of a teenage girl. What would you think of a man like that? What would be your attitude toward a preacher, a minister, a leader, who would curse and swear in front of a teenage girl? What would you say? Well, you'd say probably, Well I'm through with him. Well there was such a preacher, and thank God, God wasn't through with him. His name was Simon Peter. We're going to read about him, we're going to read about when he cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus Christ and God gave him a brand new start. For this man there was the dawning of a new day.

Now the episode that I'm about to read from you comes from the Word of God in Easter week, the same week that we're in right now. Begin if you will in verse 54. They're leading Jesus away to abuse Him and finally to nail Him up on that hellish machine that we call a cross, and notice in verse 54, "Then took they him and led him and brought him unto the high priest's house, and Peter," that's the big fisherman, "followed a far off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and had sat down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by

the fire and earnestly looked on him and said, This man was also with him. And he," that is, Peter, "denied him," that is, Jesus, "saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour, after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest and immediately while he yet spake, the cock," the rooster, "crew, and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he," that is Jesus, "had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice"—three times. "And Peter went out and wept bitterly." Peter failed, he had failed at the, all night long, the darkest night of his life, following Jesus afar off, warming himself at the enemy's fire, three times denying the Lord Jesus, and then the rooster crowed. When the rooster crows, it's the beginning of a new day. Peter failed and so do many of us, but friend, I want today to tell you that you need not make failure a hitching post. You can make it a guidepost. We can learn from our mistakes and our failures, and by the way, we can learn from the failures of others. We don't have time to make them all ourselves, so we can learn from the failures of Simon Peter and find out how as God gave Simon Peter a brand new start how God can give us a brand new start.

Now what was Simon Peter's problem? The Lord Jesus was talking about His coming death, burial, and His abuse at the hands of the enemy, and Simon Peter, when he heard this, Jesus said some of you are going to betray me and deny me and Simon Peter boastfully stuck out his chest and he said, Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death. Lord, I am. You know, that perpendicular pronoun I can get us in a lot of trouble, can't it? You take the word sin, what is the middle letter in the word sin? It is I. What is the middle letter in the word pride? It is I. And here's Simon Peter saying, Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death. Now he meant every word of it. He was dedicating himself to the Lord, but do you know the Lord doesn't want you to dedicate yourself to Him? He wants you to deny yourself. The problem with many of us is that we have dedicated self. We take our own energies, our own abilities, our own strength, our own courage, and we say, Lord, I'll do this for you, I'll do that for you, but Jesus, knowing the weakness of the flesh, said, Peter, before the rooster crows three times you're going to deny that you even know me.

Now Jesus did not tell us to dedicate self, He told us to deny self and to take up our cross and follow Him, and friend, if you don't deny self, before long you'll be denying Jesus. I want to tell you something. If you don't deny self, before long you will be denying Jesus. Peter said, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death and he failed and he failed miserably. And, here's the amazing thing. Simon Peter failed at the place of his greatest strength. Most of us do. When we fail, we don't fail at the point of our weakness, we fail at the point of our strength, because we guard our weaknesses

but we don't guard our strengths. If you ever think about Peter, what would you say is Peter's greatest strength? It would be his courage, wouldn't it? His courage. Peter was a big fisherman. He didn't seem to be afraid of most anything. You just read the stories about Simon Peter. Who was it that got out of the boat and walked on the water? It was S. P. That took a lot of courage, didn't it? Who was it that, when the soldiers came in the garden to arrest Jesus, who was it that drew out his sword and cut the ear off of that man? Leading the charge, it was S. P. He was a raw-boned, red-blooded, big, burly fisherman. He didn't seem to be afraid of much, and where did he fail? In front of a little teenage girl, cowering and denying the Lord Jesus Christ.

You think in the Bible about the men who failed and where did they fail? Almost every one of them failed at the point of their strength. We've preached about this I think last Sunday. Abraham, what was Abraham's great, strength? His faith? Where did he fail? At the point of his faith when he tried to hide the fact that he was married, married to Sarah, because he was afraid of old Pharaoh, and rather than trusting God to take care of him there in the land of Canaan where he should've trusted God, he high-tailed it down to Egypt and got into trouble and what Abram, the father of the faithful, had was a lapse of faith. That's where he failed. What was David's great strength? His integrity. Where did he fail? At the point of his integrity, he committed adultery with another man's wife. These men did not fail at the point of their weakness, they failed at the point of their strength, and I told you before but I want to tell you again, an unguarded strength is a double weakness. An unguarded strength is a double weakness. The apostle Paul finally saw that when he said, When I'm strong, then I'm weak. When I am strong, I am weak, but when I am weak, then I am strong, because when I am weak I am depending upon the Lord. I want to tell you again, God has not called upon you to dedicate self but to deny self and to depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

And here's the big, boastful fisherman. Lord, I will go with you to prison and to death and he stumbled and he failed miserably. Now what does that say to me? What does that say to you? Well it says what the apostle Paul said in First Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 12, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." The boastful man is tempting the devil to tempt him, and friend, when you say, Look at me, boy, I'm ready to serve God, I'm going all the way, the devil says, I know I'm gonna get him, because pride goeth before a fall. That's what the Bible says, "A haughty spirit goes before destruction." That was Simon Peter's problem.

Now let me tell you how the devil works, let me tell you what the devil did to Peter and what he will do to you. Before you sin, before you sin, the devil will say, Go ahead and do it, you can get away with it and he will lead you into sin. After you sin, the devil will accuse you and say, You'll never get away with it—you'll never get away with it. Isn't that just like him? Before you do it, Go ahead, you can get away with it. After you do it,

after he becomes the tempter then he becomes the accuser. Now that's exactly what he did to S. P. First of all he tempted him in the area of pride and then he accused him later on and made him feel so discouraged that he thought he would never have another opportunity. I want to tell you that that Simon Peter had gone through a long, dark night of betraying the Lord Jesus Christ three times and then the rooster crowed and it was the dawning of a new day.

Now, when that rooster crowed, there were three things, three truths that come out in my heart and I trust will come out in your heart. Not only was it a reveille, it was a revelation. I mean, three wonderful truths that we can learn from a rooster. Would you like to hear it from a rooster other than the one who's speaking? Would you like to learn from a rooster this morning? When a rooster crowed so long ago, what can we learn, what did Simon Peter think when that rooster crowed? You know, look again in verse 61. And the Bible says, verse 60, the last part, "And while he yet spake, the cock crew and the Lord turned and looked upon Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice." Three denials, three wonderful things that Simon Peter learned that day and I pray God that I will learn them and I pray God that you will learn them.

## **I. He Is the Christ of Sovereignty**

Here's the first thing that Peter learned when that rooster crowed and he learned these things about Jesus. First of all, he learned that He is the Christ of sovereignty. If you're making notes, write that down. He is the Christ of sovereignty. Now what is a sovereign? He is a lord. And what does Lord mean? It means He is in absolute control. Do you know what Peter's problem was? Peter was afraid. I mean, he failed at the point of his courage. Why was he afraid? Well, he had followed Jesus. He said, We've forsaken all to follow you. And now here's the Lord Jesus Christ betrayed. Here's the Lord Jesus Christ arrested. Here's the Lord Jesus Christ put on trial. Here's the Lord Jesus Christ going to Calvary. What kind of a leader is this? What kind of a lord is this? What kind of a ruler is this? What kind of a Messiah is this? Peter can't figure it out. It doesn't seem to be working out, it seems like things are out of control. And then the rooster crows.

Now what did Jesus say to Simon Peter? Peter, before the rooster crows you will deny me three times. Question. Is there anybody here who thinks he can keep a rooster from crowing? Is there anybody here who thinks he can keep a rooster from crowing? I mean, think of all of the roosters that were in Jerusalem that day and the Lord shut the beaks of everyone of them until the precise moment. Now a rooster is a pretty arrogant animal. The rooster thinks the sun comes up because he crows. A rooster is an alarm clock with feathers on it. But you think of all of the roosters that are in Jerusalem and

not a one of them crowed and then at the exact, precise moment. One denial, no crowing. Two denials, no crowing. Three denials, the cock crows! Right there! Who did that? The sovereign God did that. Now folks, I want you to know there was absolutely nothing out of control that day. Jesus said, No man taketh my life from me, I lay it down of myself. And there are some of you who are looking at the world and you're saying, Oh, what's happening? Where is God? I want to tell you where God is, my sweet, precious friend. God is on His throne. He is the sovereign God and don't you go around worrying and wringing your hands because of appearances. The Lord Jesus Christ rules and where He does not rule He overrules.

I have a, I have a plaque behind my desk. Some dear friend made it for me, it's right behind my desk at my home study. I turn around and I look at it frequently. It, it's a message from Jesus and here's what it says. It says, Adrian, trust me. I have everything under control. Jesus. Adrian, trust me. I have everything under control—Jesus.

Now even if we fail He won't fail. Second Timothy 2, verse 13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful. He cannot deny himself." Now friend, sometime it looks like the devil is getting the upper hand, but the devil is not succeeding. God has a wonderful, glorious plan for you and for your life. And so the very first thing that a rooster tells me is that our God is sovereign. He is the sovereign Christ.

## **II. He Is the Christ of Sympathy**

Now here's the second thing I want you to learn today and if you're all full of jitters and if it looks like your world is unraveling like Peter's world seemed to be unraveling, just remember that God is still on His throne. But not only is He the Christ of sovereignty, listen to me. He is the Christ of sympathy—the Christ of sympathy. Do you think that when Peter cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus that Jesus no longer loved Him, that Jesus no longer cared for Him? Look if you will in verse 61, "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly." Why? Because this was the look of love. Jesus did not look at Peter and say, Peter, I'm finished with you. It was not a look of contempt. It was a look that broke the heart of Simon Peter because there he saw the love, the compassion that Jesus had for this man who failed.

And I want to tell you, He has that same compassion for you right now. If you've failed, if you have denied the Lord by your life or by your words, if you've stumbled and fallen, God is not finished with you. Don't ever tell anybody, If you do thus and such a thing, God won't love you anymore. There's nothing you can do to keep Him from loving you. I hope you believe that. Listen, friend. He is not changing you so He can love you. He loves you so He can change you. He doesn't love us because we're valuable; we're

valuable because He loves us. He just loved S. P. He said, Peter, you're going to deny me three times, but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not. And if we deny Him, He abides faithful, He cannot deny himself.

Now, let me tell you something. If you're a failure and I know that I'm speaking to a lot, many who are failures, many who have failed the Lord and denied the Lord and you say, I'm so much like S. P. I want to tell you something, friend, and God sent me here to tell you this and you listen to it. God loves you just as you are. But He loves you too much to leave you that way. I hope you hear what I'm saying. He loves you just as you are and He loves you too much to leave you that way. God was not finished with this man. But when the rooster crowed, Peter remembered the word of the Lord when the Lord said, You're gonna fail me, but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.

What can we learn from a rooster this Easter week? We can learn that our God is a God of sovereignty. He rules the universe. And we can learn that He is the God of sympathy, the Christ of sympathy. He has prayed for us. Failure is not final. Simon Peter became a flaming apostle of Pentecost.

### **III. He Is the Christ of Security**

Here's the third thing that you can learn from a rooster. Things that came into Peter's heart when that rooster crowed and it was the crowing of a rooster that reminded Peter of all of this. He learned not only is He the Christ of sovereignty and not only is He the Christ of sympathy. Oh, not that He was sympathetic with Peter's sins; He was sympathetic with Peter. He'd had compassion with this man, but friend, He is the Christ of security. Now listen to me. He is the Christ who is able to keep His own.

Now go back to Luke chapter 22 and look if you will in verse 31, how this began. Look if you will, please, in Luke 22 and begin in verse 31, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon." Now, his name was Cephas, or Peter, which means a rock. The word Simon doesn't mean rock; it means something unstable, because the rock was about to turn to sand. "Simon, Simon, Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Now, folks, I'm speaking right now on the fact that He's the Christ of security. Now what Jesus is saying to Simon Peter, Simon, Satan wants you. Satan has desired you. Satan wants to put you in the sieve. He wants to sift you; he wants to have you. Now why did Satan want to sift Simon? To find the impurities. What he's talking about here is how people would purify grain, wheat. I've seen them do this many times in the Holy Land. They, they have, they put up a screen and then they put the wheat down on the threshing floor and it is trampled on by oxen until the kernel of the wheat is separated from the chaff. And then they, they get a big shovel and they begin to throw that wheat up against the screen, up against the sieve, and the chaff

remains on one side and the rocks and the pebbles and the twigs and the trash remain on one side and the wheat goes on through. That's the sieve, that's the sifting. And Jesus said, Peter, Satan wants to do that to you.

Now why did Satan want to do that to Simon Peter? Because Satan knows human nature. He saw the flaws, the faults, the failures, the foibles, the fears, that were in Peter. And Satan said, I'd like to point all that out in that guy. He claims to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. That no-good fisherman, I want to put him in the sieve. I'm going to show him what is in him and why did Satan want to put him in the sieve? So he could find the faults and what did he want to do after he found the faults? Accuse him. Isn't he the accuser of the brethren? Isn't that what he wants to do, put you in the sieve? Why, he wants to show your faults and your failures so he can point a finger of accusation back against you and Jesus said, "Simon, Satan hath desired you that he might sift you as wheat."

Now what did Satan want to do? He wanted to condemn Peter. Notice now. He says Satan has desired you. You know what this word desired means, Satan has desired? It literally means in the Greek language, he has wanted to obtain permission. He wanted permission to put you in the sieve. That means he had to get permission to do it. I've got good news and bad news today. I'll give you the good news first. You ready for the good news? Satan can't do anything to you without God's permission, isn't that good news? Now I want to give you the bad news. God permits it. God permits it. Listen. Satan has desired you, to sift you as wheat. And the Lord allowed it. Why? Well Satan wanted to condemn him, Jesus wanted to cleanse him. Same sifting. Jesus wanted this man to know what was in his heart so that he could bring him to become the mighty apostle of Pentecost, that he could give him a new day. You see, Jesus knew that, that Simon had no idea of all of these impurities that were in his heart and in his life. He didn't see this. He hadn't been sifting yet. He didn't know where the rocks and the twigs were. He said, Lord, I'm ready; I'm ready to go with you to prison and to death.

Satan knew what he was full of and so did Jesus. Have you ever thought about how Satan is, God's messenger boy? Paul, lest he be lifted up with pride, said, "There was given to me a messenger of Satan, a thorn in the flesh, lest I should be exalted above measure." What did David use to cut Goliath's head off with? Goliath's sword. Did you know that God uses the sword the devil sharpens? Did you know that Jesus will use the sieve that Satan is using against you? Now, now what Satan wants to do is to condemn you. What Jesus wants to do is to cleanse you and you'll find out that, that God allows Romans 8:28 to work in things that even Satan does against us. It's an amazing thing, an amazing thing. Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired you, that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you." Satan hath, but I—put those together, all in the same sentence. Satan sifts but Jesus saves.

Listen. You need to learn in life the difference, therefore, between Satanic accusation and Holy Spirit conviction. Now listen to me very carefully. The devil is the accuser, the Holy Spirit is the convicter. Now, you'll find some faults in your life, you'll fail miserably. The devil has you in the sieve. You see things that come out of your life, you say, Oh, good night, where'd that come from? My God, I didn't know that was in me. And Satan says, You no-good, low-down scum! Why don't you just quit going to Bellevue? Why don't you just throw it all in? You are no good. You deserve to go to hell. That's accusation. He's the accuser. The Lord Jesus will take the same thing when you've been through the sieve. The Holy Spirit will convict you and bring you to Jesus for cleansing and confession. You see, Judas was also in the sieve, Judas was filled with remorse and he hanged himself. Peter was in the sieve, filled with repentance and became a mighty man of God. There's a difference, there's a difference. Friend, analyze it. The feeling that you're feeling in your heart—is it Satanic accusation or is it Holy Spirit conviction? Don't let the devil accuse you, let the Holy Spirit of God convict you when you are going through the sieve.

Now notice what He says—notice what He says. He says, Simon, Satan has desired you, wished to obtain permission, that he might put you in the sieve and sift you and find the impurities in your life. Now listen. He says, But Peter, I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not. Now folks, let me tell you about Jesus. This is the reason that I call Him the Christ of security. There are three things that, that Jesus knew about Peter and there are three things that He knows about Adrian and He knows about you. He knew Peter's faults, He knew Peter's faith, and He knew Peter's future. He knew his faults. He said, You're going to deny me. But He also knew his faith. He said, I've prayed for you, that your faith fail not. And He knew his future. He said, And when you're converted, strengthen your brethren. Isn't that great? I mean Jesus knew all of that and when the, when the rooster crowed, Peter remembered what the Lord said and this rooster was a revelation. He remembered, Yes, yes, He knows my faults. I've been through the sieve. He realizes what's in me, but He also knows my faith.

Now friends, let me tell you something. Jesus knows the worst about me. Sometimes I do things, I say, Man, I'm surprised at myself. He's never been surprised at me yet. He knows, He knows I'm clay, He knows I'm dust, He knows I've failed. That has not stopped Him from loving me. He knows my faults, but oh, my God, He knows my faith. He knows I love Him. I stand before you today to tell you I love Jesus, I do, I do! And He knows I love Him.

Later on, after the resurrection, Jesus met Peter three times. Peter denied Christ three times. Jesus asked Peter, Peter, do you love me? Do you know what Peter said this time? He said, Lord, you know everything. Lord, you know everything, and Lord, you know I love you. I'll tell you when Jesus looks at me today, Brother Mark, He knows

I love Him, I do. He sees the weakness of my flesh, but thank God He knows I love Him. And, Jesus looked past the faults and the failures of the big fisherman and Jesus didn't say, Peter, when you get faith, He said, I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. That's the reason I believe in eternal security, because Jesus prays for us.

Have you ever thought about that scripture over there in John chapter 17, where Jesus prays for His disciples and He says, I pray for them. This is verse 9, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they're thine." And then what did He pray? Skip on down to verse 15, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." He's praying now for His disciples, that they will be kept. And then go down, here, here's the blessed one, to verse 20. And He says in that same great high priestly prayer, "Neither pray I for these alone," not just for Peter, James, and John, "but I pray for them also which shall believe on me through their word." He might as well have put my name in there. He might as well have put your name in there. Did you know that Jesus Christ has prayed for you? And what did He pray? He said, Lord, I don't pray that you take them out of the world, but I pray that you will keep them from the world. I have a Savior, dear loving Savior, who is praying and interceding for me. And Hebrews 11 verse 25 says, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Did you know He's praying for you right now? Listen. Why was it that Simon Peter, who cursed and swore and denied Christ, why did he become the mighty flaming apostle of Pentecost and why did he write those glorious books in the Bible, First and Second Peter? Because there was a Savior—a Savior, a dear loving Savior—who is the Christ of security. Give your heart to Jesus. Trust Him. You may go through the sieve, but I'll tell you, He knows where the wheat is, He knows if you love Him, He knows if you've trusted Him. Peter said, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love you.

## Conclusion

Three things that you can learn from a rooster. He's the Christ of sovereignty—He's the sovereign Christ, sovereignty. He is the Christ of sympathy—He loves us in spite of our faults. And He is the Christ of security. He'll save us and He'll keep us saved. Friend, listen to me. When the rooster crows it's the dawning of a new day. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that wonderful? Some of you have been through a dark, dark, dark night and the devil is telling you, God is finished with you. Not if you know Jesus. Not if you're saved. Peter wept bitterly. It would have been better if Peter had never denied Christ. He lost some things, but he never lost his salvation and God never stopped loving him.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you just thank the Lord for His

sovereignty, that He's in control. No matter how dark things may look in this world. Would you thank Him for His sympathy, that He loves you and He's filled with compassion. In all of your failure and all of your faults, He's never stopped loving you. And would you thank Him also for His security, that He has never yet let you go and He never will. That as He prayed for Simon Peter so long ago, He is praying for you. The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will never, no never, desert to its foes. That soul, thou all hell should endeavor to shake, I will never, no never, no never forsake. Lord, seal this to our hearts. In Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.

Now look up here. Jesus said to Peter, Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith will never fail. Now folks, have you put your faith in Jesus? Have you done what I did as a teenage boy when I gave my heart to Christ? Put your faith in Him today. I'm talking to some of you, if you died today, you'd be eternally lost because you never did what the big fisherman did when he gave his heart to Jesus Christ. The only reason that Jesus could keep him is that he had given his heart and his life to Jesus. You need to do that this morning. In just a moment we're going to sing an invitational hymn. In just a moment the ministers of our church, listen carefully. The ministers of our church are going to be standing here at the head of each of these aisles and I'm going to ask you to do something gloriously wonderful. I'm gonna ask you to make your way down one of these aisles. At the head of each of these aisles will be a minister, and say this to him...

# The Theology of a Thief

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** unknown

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 23:32

*“And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.”*

LUKE 23:32

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Wrath He Deserved
- II. The Wisdom He Displayed
- III. The Worship He Demonstrated
- IV. The Wealth He Discovered

Conclusion

## Introduction

O Lord God, I pray, dear God, in the name of Jesus as we minister your Word, O God, that a holy hush will come, dear Father, that you will come with soul-saving power and, Lord, that you will bring the lost to Jesus. O Father, how we pray that there should be tonight a burden laid on the hearts of your people for their unsaved friends. We pray, dear God, tonight that you would draw back the curtain and give us a revelation of what eternity is. O God, may we see the fearsomeness of hell. May we see, dear Lord, the glories of heaven, the sacrifice of Calvary, the sweetness of salvation, the truth of the Gospel, O dear God, tonight, open hearts to the truth, in Jesus' name, oh, in the name of Jesus Lord we pray. Amen and amen.

Charles Schultz draws the cartoon Peanuts, I suppose the most famous cartoon, comic strip in the world today. On one occasion Charles Schultz had drawn the Peanut cartoon and Lucy and Linus were looking out the window and there was a horrendous rainstorm. The rain was just coming down. Lucy looked out and she was a little worried, and she said, I hope it doesn't rain until the world is flooded. And Linus said to Lucy, Lucy, don't worry. God said in Genesis chapter 19, verses 13 and 14, that He would never, ever again destroy the world with a flood, and as a sign of that He put a rainbow in the sky. And Lucy just sighed and said, You know, that sure makes me feel a lot better. And Linus said, Sound theology has a way of doing that.

Folks, I want to talk to you tonight about some sound theology, and I pray God it will do something to make you feel real good. I want to show you from the Word of God how

that you can know beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure that you're saved and on the way to heaven. The title of our message tonight is this, The Theology of a Thief. Take your Bibles, if you have them, and turn with me, please, to Luke chapter 23 and I'm going to begin reading in verse 32. Now this story is the story of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Bible begins here in Luke 23, verse 32, "And there were also two malefactors, the word malefactor means an evil doer, a criminal, lead with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors one on the right hand and the other on the left." And then I want you to skip on down, if you will, to verse 39. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him saying, 'If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.' And the other answering rebuked him saying, 'Doest thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation, and we indeed justly for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss.' And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'"

Had you gone to Jerusalem that day so long ago, and had you gone just outside the wall to the north, out through the Damascus gate, there you would have seen a rocky hill. And on that hill, you would have seen three crosses, and the men on those crosses—impaled on those crosses, fastened to those crosses by bloody nails, squirming in agony and pain, like some kind of scarecrows erected up against the sky. You would have seen on that one cross to the left a thief. On the other cross to the right, a thief. On that middle cross would have been the very Son of God.

There were three of them there that day. Three crosses. One of those men on that cross died in his sin and went to hell. Another man died to his sin and went to heaven because of the middle man who died for both. Yet one was lost and went to hell. One was saved and went to heaven. There were three crosses there that day. One was a cross of rejection, for one of those thieves rejected the Lord Jesus, laughed at the Lord Jesus, scorned the Lord Jesus, railed at the Lord Jesus, ridiculed the Lord Jesus even while He was dying. Another of those thieves was there and he received the Lord Jesus. He said, Lord Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Three crosses, a cross of redemption, a cross of rejection, and a cross of reception.

I want you to think about the thief who prayed and asked the Lord to save him. I want you to imagine that you are there. There is that dying thief; he's there upon that cross. He's been there for many hours. His body is dehydrated, the blood has been oozing from his body and dropping to the ground below. His head is throbbing. His tongue is swollen. There are flies in the gaping wounds. His body is wracked with pain. He can hardly turn his head, but he looks over to the Lord Jesus Christ with languid eyes and he says this, "Lord, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

And the Lord Jesus Christ said to him, “Verily I say to thee,” some translations give it, “Amen, I say unto thee today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” I want you to know this very moment that man who prayed to Jesus and asked Jesus to save him, is right now walking the very streets of heaven. He has come in through the gates of glory and he has been saved.

Now how did he get saved? He got saved because he turned to Jesus. But why did he turn to Jesus? He turned to Jesus because he believed certain things. He had, believe it or not, a sound theology. I don't know where he got this theology, the Bible doesn't tell us. Maybe he had been taught in the synagogue. Maybe he had heard the Lord Jesus preach. Maybe he had been taught by his mother. Maybe he had observed certain things there that day, perhaps he had watched them as they nailed Jesus to the cross and heard Jesus bless His tormentors who nailed him to the cross. Perhaps he had followed Jesus, carrying his cross behind Jesus, and he heard Jesus as Jesus ministered to the crowd, and those that were weeping for Him, when He said, “Don't weep for me, weep for yourselves.” Perhaps he had seen the Lord Jesus, listened to the Lord Jesus when Jesus there on the cross prayed for those who were jeering Him. There was something about what Jesus did. I don't know what it was. I don't know how it got into this man's heart. I don't know how it got into this man's mind, but I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman, that this man had a better theology than many pastors and preachers in America today. I want you to listen to the theology of a thief. I want you to see how this dying thief got saved. I want you to listen and see how Jesus said to him, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”

## **I. The Wrath He Deserved**

Let's study his theology. The very first thing I want you to notice is what he had to say about sin. Notice in verse 39, “And one of the malefactors, which were hanged railed on him saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him saying, 'Dost thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.’” The very first thing I see is the wrath this man deserves. This man realized that he was sinner. He realized that the wages of sin is death. He realized that “the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.” Here was a man who did not deny his sinfulness. Here was a man who admitted openly and publicly that he was suffering for his sin. Ladies and gentlemen, you will never, ever get anybody saved until that person first of all admits that he is a sinner and that he deserves hell. Only lost sinners seek a Savior. The problem with so many churches today is this, they have to become glorified country clubs with steeples on top because they are filled with baptized pagans who have never confessed before Almighty God that they're sinners.

Now it may be repugnant to you, it may seem negative to you, it may sound like it is not Dale Carnegie-ish to you, but I want to tell you, dear friend, I want to tell you in love, I want to tell you in compassion, but I want to tell you straight, I want to tell you plain that you will never be saved—no one has ever been saved—until first of all that person has seen himself as a lost sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. The Bible says, “There's none that doeth good, no not one.” The Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” The Bible says, “The wages of sin is death.” The Bible says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.” This man said, We are suffering the judgment of God. We are suffering justly. We are receiving what we deserve.

So many people in this world today are egomaniacs strutting their way to hell, thinking they're too good to be damned. They think that the gospel is for the thief, the murderer, the pervert, the adulterer, the drunkard, but they don't think that the gospel is for them. And even as I'm preaching tonight, you are saying, Brother Rogers, I'm not a thief. That man was a thief, but I'm not a thief. Let me tell you something friend, if you're not serving God, you're a thief. You say, Now, wait a minute. Don't call me a thief. I'll say it again. If you're not serving God, you're a thief. God is the landowner. God is the landlord. You're breathing God's air. You're walking on God's green earth. “The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.” You're eating God's sustenance. You live, you exist, because God made you, God created you. You belong to Him. And if you're here and drawing these things from God and not serving God, you're as much a thief as if you were representing a particular company, drawing a salary and not working for that company. I am telling you, dear friend, that this man was a thief, and every man without the Lord Jesus Christ has robbed God of the glory, robbed God of the service, robbed God of all that belongs to Him.

One man said, when his pastor tried to get him to come to Christ, or when the pastor tried to get him to be saved, the man said, Well, I'm going to live my life for the devil, and then at the end of my life, when it's all over, I'm going to be like the dying thief. I'm going to give my heart to Jesus and go to heaven. The pastor said, There's one difference between that man and you—that man was dying thief, you're a living thief. Any man, any man who would live his life without serving the Lord, any man who would drink God's clear water, any man who'll breathe God's pure air, any man who'll walk on God's green earth, any man who'll live the life that God has given him and does not serve God, in my book and in God's book, that man is a thief.

Now the Bible says, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” He doesn't save any other kind of people. Dear friend, will you admit tonight that you're a sinner? I can remember working as a counselor in the Billy Graham crusade one time, when a debutante came forward to get saved. She was a beautiful, lovely girl. She came forward to give her heart to Christ. I

was dealing with her. Her mother came into the counseling room. Her mother was incensed. Her mother said, Sweetheart, you don't need to be saved. You're a good girl. You're a sweet girl. Mommy knows you, darling, you don't need to be saved. There's nothing wrong with you. I never will forget what that young lady said to her mother. She said, Mother, you don't know my heart. Friend, the Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." There's no one here so bad he cannot be saved, no one here so good he need not be saved. And no one ever will be saved until that person confesses that he's a sinner.

Years ago I heard of a woman who was doing work in a jail service, and she was preaching or ministering or sharing with the prisoners behind the bars. One man came to her, came up close, and put his face right there against the jail bars. And he said, Lady, can you please help me. He said, I am an awful, terrible, horrible sinner. She said, Thank God. He said, No you didn't understand what I said. I'm an awful terrible, horrible sinner. She said, Thank God. He said, Lady, please don't make fun of me. Don't ridicule me. She said, I'm not making fun of you; I'm not ridiculing you. I thank God that you've confessed that you're a sinner because now you can be saved. Listen, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to saved sinners."

## **II. The Wisdom He Displayed**

But I want you to notice not only the wrath he deserved, but I want you to notice the wisdom he displayed. Look with me, if you will, now in verse 30 of this same chapter. "And the other answering rebuked him saying, 'Dost thou not fear God?'" Not only did this man know that he was a sinner and sin deserves death, but he also realized that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, the beginning of knowledge. Don't you fear God? he said to the other thief. Friend, do you fear God? Do you know what's wrong in America today? We have a generation of people who don't fear God. The Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the very beginning of wisdom." Here was a man who realized that he ought to fear God. You say, I don't understand this 'fear of God' business. Adrian do you fear God? Absolutely I fear God. I'm not afraid of God, I fear God. What's the difference? Do you think an electrician when he goes to work everyday is afraid of electricity? He couldn't live if he were. I mean, he'd die of fright. He's not afraid of electricity, but he fears electricity. You see the difference?

Friend, listen, the fear of the Lord is that holy respect, that awe, that reverence that we have for Almighty God. I'm not afraid of policemen, but I fear policemen, and so do you. You're driving down the road and you see that black and white, you see that automobile over there, you see that radar, the very first thing you do is to check the speedometer, isn't that right? And then after you pass, you're looking in the rear view

mirror. You're saying, Is he after me? Now that doesn't mean that you're afraid of policemen. You meet a policeman on the street, you don't quake and fear in the wrong sense. But, dear friend, there is a healthy fear of the Lord. The fear of God is love on its knees.

Do you know why America is ripe for judgment? There is no fear of God before people's eyes. The Bible says this in Matthew chapter 10 and verse 28, "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." You know, there are people today—I listen to them on television—they ridicule God, they ridicule Christians. If you are a Bible believer, they will call you a fundamentalist. They'll try to link you up with the Ayatollah Khomeini and Jim Jones and everybody else, and they will laugh and they will ridicule. Our newspapers will do it. Many of our television stations do it. Many of our situational comedies will do it. When's the last time you've ever seen a Bible-believing Christian portrayed on television as anybody who was honest, anybody who had sense, anybody who had decency, anybody who had love, anybody who had compassion? You won't see that anymore. I'll tell you why. Because we have a generation of people who rejoice to ridicule holy people and good things. They laugh at God. They mock at God. When Jesus Christ was on the cross the Bible says they railed at Him and this thief was amazed at the other thief who continued to do it and he said, Say, don't you fear God?

Friend, I want to tell you when a generation, a world ceases to fear God, that generation, that world, that nation, that community is on its last legs. Somebody says, Well, I don't believe in a religion built on fear. I don't believe in using fear as a motive. I do. And I'll tell you I'm not the only one who does. The medical profession does. They say, Watch your cholesterol, you'll die of a heart attack. The safety engineer does, he says, Wear goggles, you'll put your eyes out when you're working on heavy machinery if you don't. The traffic expert says, Slow down, you'll have a traffic fatality. Everybody believes in using fear as a motive—except when a preacher stands up and warns people not to go to hell. They say, I don't believe in a religion built on fear. Jesus said, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body and hell." I had rather frighten you into heaven than lull you into hell.

### **III. The Worship He Demonstrated**

This thief first of all stated the wrath he deserved and then I want you to notice the wisdom he displayed, but I want you to notice a third thing about this thief. I want you to notice the worship he demonstrated. I want you to see what he felt about the Lord Jesus. Look with me in verse 42, if you will, of this same chapter. And the Bible says, "And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'"

It's not enough to know that you're a sinner. It's not enough to know that God is a holy God, and God deserves to be feared. But I want you to notice what this man knew about the Lord Jesus. First of all he knew that Jesus was the sinless Son of God. Notice, he says in verse 41, "This man has done nothing amiss." Phillips translates it this way, This man has done nothing wrong in His life. This man never did anything wrong. Jesus never committed one sin. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that He knew no sin. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 15, "He was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin." The Bible says in 1 Peter 2, verse 22, "He did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."

Jesus Christ asked His enemies a question I wouldn't dare ask my friends. And here was the question, Which of you convicts me of sin? Is there anybody who can point a finger of accusation at me and say that I am a sinner? Jesus was sinless. There was only one person sinless and it was Jesus Christ. And, friend, if Jesus Christ wasn't sinless, He's not God, because He says there's none good but one, that is God. Jesus is the sinless Son of God and this dying thief recognized that Jesus was sinless.

But not only did he recognize that He was the sinless Christ, he recognized that He was the sovereign Christ because he said, "Lord, remember me." Now, you think about it. Here is Jesus, naked, beaten, bloody, bruised, dying on a cross, and that thief turned to Him, and that thief called Him, Lord. What kind of a kingdom did He have? Why, His kingdom was shrinking to the narrow confines of a tomb. What kind of a throne did He have? His throne was a cross. What kind of a scepter did He have? His scepter was a bloody nail. What kind of an allegiance did He have? They spat in His face. And yet there that day that thief called, Lord. And that thief said, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Peter called Him Lord after that great catch of fish. Thomas called Him Lord after the resurrection, when he put his hands in the nail prints in His hand and the spear wound in His side. But there that day, when Jesus was dying in agony and blood, that thief called Him Lord.

Have you ever called Him Lord? That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Listen, that thief believed He was the sinless Christ. That thief believed He was the sovereign Christ. That thief believed that He was the saving Christ because he prayed, "Lord, remember me." That is, Lord, save me. And Jesus saved Him, right there on the spot, because he turned to Christ and asked for mercy. Now there are people today who'll tell you that in order to be saved you've got to be a member of thus and such a church, or you've got to be baptized, or you've got to live this way or live that way. I want to ask you a question. How was this thief saved? Was this thief saved by good works? He couldn't lift a hand to do any good works. His feet were nailed to the cross. How was he saved? Was he saved by giving money? He had no money to give.

He's crucified naked there on a cross. Was he saved there by being baptized? There are those people who tell us today that if you're not baptized you can't be saved. Well, then, this thief didn't go to Paradise; he went to hell. But Jesus said, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise. I believe in baptism. I believe that everybody who gets saved ought to be baptized. But I want to tell you that baptism, whether a spoonful or a tank full, can't away your sin. The Bible says Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

How was he saved? He prayed, "Lord, Lord, remember me," and he was saved right there instantaneously and eternally by the grace of God. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." If you're here tonight without Christ, oh, my friend, you want to be saved. If you'll only be like that dying thief, recognize that you are a sinner. Recognize that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Recognize that you must face God in the Judgment. Believe that Jesus Christ is the sovereign God, the very Lord, the sinless Son of God, the saving Son of God. Turn to Him and say to Him what this dying thief said, "Lord, Lord remember me."

The Bible says, For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He was saved by grace, G-R-A-C-E—God's Riches at Christ Expense. Do you know what Grace is? Grace is not merely undeserved love. If you show love, undeserved love to a friend, that's not grace. If you show undeserved love to a stranger, that's not grace. It's when you show undeserved love to an enemy, that is grace. "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The heavens declare the glory of God. The cross declares the grace of God—Christ died for us. You're saved by the grace of God. How are you going to get to heaven? Only by the grace of God.

#### **IV. The Wealth He Discovered**

My dear friend, there's one last thing I want you to see. I want you to look with me in verse 43 and see the wealth that he discovered. Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Here's this man, he turns to Jesus. He says, Lord Jesus, please remember me. Remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said, My friend, you're going to heaven right now. And in one moment that thief received more as a gift than he had ever stolen in his life. In one moment he's made fit to go to heaven. In one moment he receives the right to walk on streets of Gold.

The Bible teaches that when a person is saved, and when that person dies, that person goes immediately to be with our Lord in heaven. Now there are some people

who teach, and erroneously I believe, that when you die, your soul sleeps in the grave until the resurrection. But that's not so. Jesus told this thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 8, says, when we're absent from the body we're present with the Lord. The apostle Paul said, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ." If I were to fall down on this platform and get very still, if these men were to come or a doctor out of the audience come up here and take my vital signs, they might say, Adrian is dead. But they'd be telling a lie. You're looking at a man who can never die. I'm not going to die. It's impossible for me to die. Jesus said, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." I'll just simply move out of my body. That thief moved out of his body and he went straight to heaven.

There was a man in London whose name was Mr. Peas. His name was literally Solomon Peas, P-E-A-S, Mr. Peas. Mr. Peas wrote these words and had them put it on his tombstone: Beneath these clouds and beneath these trees lies the body of Solomon Peas. This is not Peas, it's only the pod. Peas has shelled out and gone home to God. Now friend, that's exactly what happened to this thief. Jesus said to this thief, "Today you'll be with me in Paradise." Somewhere in a Palestinian grave are the moldering bones of that thief. But I want to tell you right now that thief is face to face with Jesus because he simply prayed and said, "Lord remember me."

I was reading recently of a woman on an airplane. They were flying to Denver and got in such a bad storm, it looked like the plane was going to go down. That woman sitting on that plane was simply humming, Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine. She was an elderly woman. When the plane finally did get on the ground, the man sitting next to her said, I've never seen a person with such calm assurance as yours. Why? What is the basis of that assurance? She said, Well, to tell you the truth, I've lived a long time. I have a precious daughter who died three years ago, and that daughter is in heaven. I was on my way to Denver to visit my other daughter, and I just got to thinking it really didn't make much difference which daughter I saw today, whether I see the one in Denver, or whether I see the one over yonder. Oh, friend, you can have that kind of faith. You can have that kind of assurance. Here was a man who prayed and he said, "Lord remember me." Remember me. That's all he prayed. He just called on the Lord and the Lord saved him.

Now, you say, Pastor, if I get to my deathbed, and I pray and ask Jesus at the last moment to save me. Is deathbed repentance possible? It's possible, but it's not probable. The Bible records one deathbed repentance and only one, that no one should despair, but one and only one, that no one should presume. I'm telling you that any time, any place, anywhere that anybody calls on Jesus he'll be saved. But the Bible is not full of stories of people who got saved on the deathbed. Most of the people who are saved get saved when they are young. Jesus said to that thief, Today shalt thou be with

me. Today is God's Word. Tomorrow is the Devil's word. Oh, my friend, if you ever intend to get saved, now is the day. Now is the hour. How was this thief saved? He didn't have anything good to do. He just prayed. He just said, "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, remember me, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

A little boy heard that there was a man in his neighborhood who was very wise. The man seemed to know the answer to every question, so the little boy decided that he would see just how smart the man was, and see if he could trick the old man. And so he caught a little baby bird, put the bird in his hands and the little boy held him in such a way that some of the feathers were showing through his fingers. The little boy came up to the old man and said, Mister, I want to ask you a question. He said, What do I have in my hand? The old man with a twinkle in his eyes saw the bird feathers, and he said, Why, son, you have a bird in your hand. He said, That's right, mister. Now he said, I want to ask you a second question, is the bird dead or alive? Now the little boy thought he could fool the old man. If the old man said that the bird was dead he was going to open his hands and let the bird fly away. But if the old man said that the bird was alive, he was going to squeeze the life out of the bird and then open his hands and say, No, you're wrong. The bird is dead. So he asked the old man. He said, Old man, sir, tell me. Is the bird dead or is he alive? The old man thought for a moment and then he said, The answer to that question, my son, is in your hands.

## **Conclusion**

Now folks, you have soul tonight—only one soul. Your soul is worth more than this entire world. Whether that soul will live or die is in your hands. It's in your hands tonight. I want to promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you'll ask Jesus Christ to save you tonight, if you'll do like a dying thief did so long ago. If you'll say, Lord Jesus, remember me, save me, I promise you He will save you. Now, if you don't mean business He won't save you. If you're playing games, He won't save you. The Lord does business with those who mean business. But this man just simply looked to the Lord and he was saved by grace. He was saved instantaneously; he was saved eternally, when he trusted the Lord Jesus.

A chaplain found a dying soldier on the battlefield. That dying soldier had been mortally wounded. That chaplain knew that in a matter of two or three minutes the boy would be dead. He knelt over the broken body of that boy, cradled his dying head in his hands, looked into the face of that boy and said, Son, I want to pray for you. The soldier looked into the face of the chaplain and said, Chaplain, am I going to live? The chaplain wasn't a doctor, but it was obvious that the boy was not going to live. The chaplain didn't want to tell him, however, he was going to die, so the chaplain just changed the subject. The chaplain said, Son, are you a Christian? Oh, yes sir, he said, I'm a Christian. He said,

The greatest day of my life was as a lad when I walked down the aisle of my church and gave my hand to my pastor and my heart to Jesus Christ. Yes sir, I'm a Christian, Christ is my Lord and my Savior. Chaplain, am I going to live? The Chaplain looked into his face and said, Yes, son, you are going to live, as he lay that dying head down upon the ground. He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

# Why Three Crosses?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 2, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 23:32**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Failure That Condemned Him

II. The Fear That Convicted Him

III. The Faith That Converted Him

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## Introduction

Would you turn to Luke chapter 23, please, and we're going to begin reading in just a moment with verse 32, and read on. I want to talk to you about our crosses out there. They're so beautiful, are they not? Praise God. Thank God. Yes. Amen. And, my heart just began to beat as I drove up to the church tonight and saw them against the sky. And I again want to thank all of those who had a part. This morning, in one of the services, I thanked David Scott for all the work that he did in getting that constructed and getting all of everything ready. Of course, the key man behind so much of this is Bobby Lewis. And Bobby Lewis is the man that coordinates special events around here. And as I told you this morning in the message, nothing just happens. There's planning. There's work. Everybody comes to church on, at Bellevue and says, "Well, it just happens." No, it doesn't just happen. There are people who are gifted and anointed and called who work behind the scenes to make these things happen. And I'm so grateful for all who had a part. And, Jim, for you and the music. And, Carter. He did pull it off—120 trumpets. That is wonderful. And all that happened there in the lighting, the dedication of the crosses.

But the question comes: Why do we have three crosses? Well, let's look in Luke chapter 23 and begin in verse 32: "And there were also two malefactors..." That means people who do evil. Malefactor is just old English for evildoers—"...led with him to be put to death." The him refers to Jesus. Two evildoers were carried to be put to death with Jesus. "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his

raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers, also with him derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be the Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." Now it was done, I think, to humiliate Him. It was done in sarcasm, but, indeed, it was true. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward for our sins. But this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus—that is, this last, dying thief—he said unto Jesus, Lord, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Thus says the Word of God.

Why do we have three crosses? Well, Jesus was crucified between two thieves. If you had gone to Jerusalem that day, on a rocky hill shaped like a skull, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, you would have seen gruesome crosses, and on those crosses three men dying in agony and blood. One, of course, was the very Son of God, the Lord Jesus. When God, the mighty maker died for man, the creature's sin. On the other cross was a man who turned to Jesus in repentance and faith and was saved. He became a new creature. On the other cross was a man who cursed, swore, railed upon Jesus, mocked Jesus, ridiculed Jesus, refused Jesus, died and went to hell. So, on the middle cross there was the cross of redemption. On one of the crosses there was a cross of reception. On the other cross there was a cross of rejection. Redemption. Reception. And Rejection. I believe God planned it that way. I believe it did not happen incidentally that we have three crosses. A dying Savior. A dying saint. And a dying sinner. These all speak to us.

Now I want to speak, primarily, about that dying thief who turned to Jesus, and looked at Jesus through languid eyes in tortuous pain, who looked to Jesus, and he prayed a great prayer. He said, "Lord, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Now I don't know what prompted that prayer. I don't know what was in this man's background that made him pray that prayer. He certainly was a sinner, but he had some intuition, he had some revelation, he had some knowledge. Maybe there, hanging upon that cross, he remembered the lessons that he's learned in the synagogue as a child, the Holy Scriptures, about one day that God would send a Redeemer, God would send a Savior. Maybe God the Holy Spirit illumined those Scriptures. Maybe he had been prayed for by his mother. Maybe he had a godly mother

who was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe he'd been witnessed to by someone. Maybe he had heard the Lord Jesus as Jesus preached and taught. I don't know. Perhaps he was brought under conviction as he saw Jesus being kind to those soldiers who mocked Him and crucified Him. Perhaps he was brought under great, great conviction as he saw the heart of Jesus pouring out love, good for evil, and heard Jesus pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," and he knew that he was the one also that needed forgiveness. I don't know what it was, but this much I know. That God put into that man's heart incredible faith.

I see him there. He's nailed to the cross. His tongue is swollen. His hands bleeding. His body tortured with pain. His throat filled with surcharged blood. He can hardly turn his head. But he looks at Jesus and he prays an incredible prayer. And there's so much theology in what this thief said that I want us to learn from this man, and I want you to remember tonight, and every night when you drive up to this church and see those three crosses, I want you to remember what caused this man to come to Jesus.

## **I. The Failure That Condemned Him**

And the first thing I want you to see is the failure, what I call the failure that condemned him. Look, if you will, in verse 39: "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself. And the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" This was a man who realized that he was a sinner, condemned. And then he said, "And we, indeed, justly—that is, we are condemned justly—for we receive the due reward of our deeds..." Now I'm going to stop there.

And let me say this about all good theology. There is no good theology that does not have a proper conception of sin. And that is the missing note in today's world. And, sadly enough, it is the missing note in, in, modern church growth. Today, young preachers are told, and God have mercy upon us, "Don't tell people they're sinners. Make them feel good when they come to church—meet their felt needs." Well, friend, I tell you what. We need to tell a world, a hell-bent world, that they are sinners, lost and undone before a righteous and a holy God.

This man knew something about sin. He knew that the wages of sin is death. "We are dying justly." This man knew that there is a relationship between sowing and reaping, because he said, "We are receiving the just recompense, the thing that is due for our sins." He knew this—that whatever a man sows he's also going to reap. What this man knew, and how he knew it, I don't know, but he knew the justice of God. He said, "We are suffering justly."

Nobody has ever truly come to the Lord Jesus Christ who has not, first of all, seen

that he is a sinner. Now the problem is that when we read a passage like this and we see a man who was a malefactor, a thief hanging on a cross, we say, “Yes, those old sinners need to be saved.” And many times, when I will preach, well-dressed people will come into a worship center like this and they’ll look around to see if any of those old sinners are going to go forward and get saved, and they are the ones that need to be saved. And Jesus said to the Pharisees, who were self-righteous that, “Harlots and thieving tax collectors are going into the kingdom before you.” You see, it’s not the amount of sin that condemns; it is the fact of sin. God does not grade on the curve. We get the idea that there are little sinners and big sinners, and big sinners go to hell and little sinners somehow are going to be excused, but they’re not. The Bible says, “All have sinned and—what?—come short of the glory of God.”

Do you want me to tell you what sin is? “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Now how high is the glory of God? Sin is the equation between the glory of God and where you are. Sin is that gap. Sin is that difference. That’s all it is. So don’t lie down in the gutter alongside some old hypocrite and measure yourself alongside some hypocrite, and say, “I’m six inches longer than he is.” You measure where you are now and the glory of God. And that differential the Bible calls sin. Now if there’s a bottle of poison here and there’s a quart of it, and a drop of it will kill you, you don’t have to drink a whole bottle to die. See, it is the fact of sin.

Here is a man that was a sinner. Now you’re never going to get the right diagnosis and the right, excuse me, never going to make the right prescription until you have the right diagnosis. And once you see the sickness which is sin, then you’re going to understand there’s only one prescription that can possibly save, and that’s the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are sinners.

I’ve told you this story before, but I had an evangelist friend whose name is Eddie Martin. I believe that Eddie, in time past, preached at Bellevue Baptist Church. I’ve had him in my meetings. We had him, Jim, down in Merritt Island. Eddie Martin had an experience when he was preaching in a worship service. And it was one of those revivals where God was moving. And he was down at the front, as the evangelist, receiving people as they were coming forward to give their heart to Jesus. And a lady came forward in that service. This lady was dressed just so. Her hair was coiffed just right. Her face was beautifully made up. Nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, I like it. Nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong with that at all. But this lady was very proper and very precise. And she came forward and she said, “Mr. Martin, I would like to become a Christian.”

“Well”, he said, that’s very fine.” Everything sounded wonderful. He decided he’d lead her in the sinner’s prayer. And he said, “Would you pray this prayer after me? Dear

God.” She said, “Dear God.” “I am a sinner.” She didn’t say anything. He thought well, maybe the singing and everything, she didn’t hear him. So he said, “Repeat after me. Dear God” “Dear God.” “I am a sinner.” She didn’t say anything. He said, “Lady, do you want to be saved? Do you want to be a Christian?” “Yes.” “Well, repeat after me. Dear God, I am a sinner.” She said, “Mr. Martin, I am not a sinner.” He said, “Lady, the Bible says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” “Well,” she said, “Mr. Martin, if I am a sinner, I’m a good sinner.” He said to her, “Lady, there are no good sinners Go back to your seat. You’re not ready to be saved.” She turned in a huff, angry, insulted, hurt, perplexed and started back to her seat, took a few steps, and stopped, and the mascara started to flow. She turned around and came back to him and said, “God, be merciful to me. I am a no-good sinner.” He said, “Now you’re ready to be saved.”

And I want to tell you nobody is going to come as a peacock into the presence of God. There are people who come down the aisles of our churches sometimes, thinking they’re doing God a wild favor, unbroken over their sins. But the Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” And 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 15, says, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

And so, what do we see about this man on this third cross? We see the failure that condemned him. He said, “We’re condemned, and we are condemned justly.”

## **II. The Fear That Convicted Him**

Two: Not only the failure that condemned him, but I want you to see the fear that convicted him. And that’s another missing note. Look, if you will, in verse 40. “The other answered, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing...” That also is the missing note in today’s churches. There is no fear of God.

Our generation today is sadly lacking in the fear of God. The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Do you know what that means? It means you don’t have any spiritual knowledge if you don’t begin with that foundation. The fear of the Lord. Now what is the fear of the Lord? It means a holy reverence for a righteous God.

If you’re an electrician, you have a fear of electricity if you’re going to be an electrician for a long time. It doesn’t mean you’re afraid. An electrician doesn’t tremble every time he goes to work, but he has a respect for electricity.

If you’re a pilot, you have a fear of the law of gravity. It doesn’t mean you tremble when you get into an airplane, but as one of my members, who is a pilot, told me, he said, “Pastor, there are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but there are very few old, bold pilots,” those who have a fear of the law of gravity.

I'm not afraid of policemen, but I'll have to confess, every time I see one of those patrol cars stopped by the side of the road, I look at my speedometer, and I imagine that most of you do too. I call them foot lifters, these guys, as you go past. Now I'm not afraid of policemen. I have them as friends, but there is a respect.

Do you know what is wrong with America today? We have lost the fear of God. One wise man said, "The fear of God is love on its knees." Dr. A. W. Tozer, a great man now in heaven, said this: "No one can know the true grace of God who does not, first of all, know the fear of God."

Now we have a generation that's lost its concept of sin. We have a generation that has lost its fear of God. And, therefore, we live in a society that is ripe for judgment.

The crowds that day jeered the Lord Jesus Christ. They mocked Him. They had no fear of God. Romans chapter 3, verse 18, says of people like this: "There's no fear of God before their eyes."

Now if you're not a Christian, you may say, "Pastor Rogers, I don't believe in a religion built on fear." Well, fear is not all there is to it. That's the beginning of knowledge. But if you're not a Christian, I want to tell you plainly, frankly, forthrightly, and if you're listening on radio coming through our city; you may be a businessman right now on the Interstate, but you have much to fear. And I'm going to give you the words of Jesus and you listen. Matthew 10, verse 28: Jesus said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." That's what the Lord Jesus said. There is much to fear. And sometimes people say, "Well, I don't like preachers who are always, you know, one of the things if you want to ridicule a preacher today, you call him what? A hellfire and damnation preacher. That's the way they ridicule preachers today. I remind you that Jesus Christ had more to say about hell than any other person in all of the Bible. And so, if you ridicule that kind of preaching, what you're really doing is ridiculing the Lord Jesus. And I had rather frighten you into heaven than lull you into hell. There is much to be afraid of. And here, you see, what you see is the failure that condemned this man. He was a sinner. You see the fear that convicted this man. He knew that God is a righteous and a holy God who punishes sin.

### **III. The Faith That Converted Him**

Now here's the third thing I want you to see about him. I want you to see the faith that converted him. Because it's not enough for you to know that you're a sinner. It's not enough even for you to tremble at your sin. You've got to know the remedy for that sin. And that's the reason, I believe, the Lord allowed this story to be put in the gospel of Luke. This man had an incredible theology not only of sin and not only of judgment, but

he had an incredible theology of salvation, of faith. What kind of faith does he have? What was his theology? Well, he had a sound understanding of the Lordship of Christ.

First of all, he saw that Jesus is the sinless Christ. Look in verse 41: “And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds—but now, notice, he’s talking about Jesus. This man hath done—what’s that next word?—nothing amiss.” He never sinned one time. Where this man got this idea, how he learned this truth, I do not know, but he is giving wonderful truth. Phillips translation says, “This man never did anything wrong in his life.” You see, this man knew that he needed a Savior, and only a sinless Savior could save him. If you have dirty clothes, you’re not going to get your dirty clothes clean by washing your dirty clothes in dirty water. And a sinner can save no one. But Jesus is sinless. Put these verses down:

Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21, speaking of Jesus, the Bible says, “God the Father hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” Jesus knew no sin.

The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15: “For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted—tested—like as we are, yet without sin.” He is the stainless, spotless, sinless, perfect, unblemished Savior. Hallelujah!

First Peter chapter 2, verse 22: It speaks of Jesus. “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.”

If you’re going to sin, one of the easiest ways you’re going to sin is with your mouth. Somebody said, “Many things open by mistake, but none as frequently as the mouth.” No guile was found in the mouth of the Lord Jesus. Jesus could look straight at His enemies, His deepest critics, and He could challenge them with this question: Which of you convinceth me of sin?

This man—we’re talking now about the faith that converted him—he saw Jesus Christ as the sinless Christ. And not only did he see Jesus Christ as the sinless Christ, He saw Jesus Christ as the sovereign Christ. Look at it again in verse 45 of this same chapter, excuse me, in verse 42: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, Lord, remember me...” He saw Jesus as Lord. No one else called Him Lord that day. I mean, He didn’t look like a Lord. His kingdom now is shrinking to the narrow dimensions of a tomb. It’s easy to call Him Lord when it looks like He’s on top. Peter called Him Lord after that great catch of fish that day. Thomas called Him Lord after the resurrection when Thomas saw the nail prints in His hands and the scar of the spear in His side. Thomas fell down in front of Him, and said, “My Lord and my God.” But this man called Jesus Lord as He is dying on a cross. Now not just Lord as a term of respect; he’s talking about His sovereignty. He says, “Lord, remember me when you come into—

what?—your kingdom.” He saw Him as a King, His throne a bloody cross, His crown a crown of thorns, His scepter a wicked nail, the homage due Him spit in His face, and he called Him Lord. He called Him Lord.

And, you know, you’re going to have to catch that vision today, too, because, folks, today it looks like Jesus is getting the little end of the deal. But it won’t always be that way. Jesus, today, is being mocked. He’s still being ignored. He’s still being scorned. He’s still being refused. He is still being rejected and crucified afresh. But one of the my favorite Scriptures, and I have a number of them, is 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 15, which speaks of Jesus, which says, “Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.” That’s our Savior.

Now this man, through the eye of faith, saw Jesus as the sinless Christ. He saw Jesus as the sovereign Christ. There they were. He’s nailed up on that cross, and they’re challenging Him, “Come down from the cross. If You’re the Son of God, save yourselves, save Yourself, and us also.” It was not that He could not save Himself; it was that He would not save Himself. I’ve told you before that was the wrong question that they challenged Him with, “If You’re the Son of God, come down from the cross.” They should have stood in front of that empty tomb, and said, “If You’re the Son of God, come out of that tomb.” That was the test. He came to die for the sins of men.

Peter, when Peter went to defend Him with a sword, Jesus said, “Peter, put up your sword. Could I not call twelve legions of angels; a legion, six thousand soldiers. I could call twelve legions of angels.” Twelve times six thousand. I read in the Old Testament where one angel killed 185,000 people. Let’s take twelve times six thousand and multiply that by 185,000. You’ve got over thirteen billion angels, I mean, angels with the power to kill thirteen billion people. Look. It wasn’t that He was powerless there upon that cross. It wasn’t the nails that held Jesus to the cross. He could have come down. Thank God, He didn’t. Thank God, He did not come down! It was not that He, He could not; it was that He would not. He had a kingdom. And this man saw through all of that. How, in the light of bloody Calvary, he saw it all, I don’t know, but there was in this man’s heart and in this mind a vision of Christ.

He saw Him as the sinless Christ. He saw Him as the sovereign Christ. And, therefore, he saw Him as the saving Christ. And he said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

Now this man was saved. The question is, how was he saved? It is clear and plain that he was saved by grace. What else could he be saved by? He certainly wasn’t saved by works. What kind of works can a man do when he’s crucified? He wasn’t saved by giving. He was not saved by his past life, because he was a wicked miscreant, a malefactor, an evildoer, a vile, wicked man suffering. There was only one thing that

saved this man, and that is grace. And what is grace? Grace is that quality of God's nature that makes Him love undeserving sinners and saves them when they cannot save themselves. If I show kindness to a friend or to a stranger even, that's not grace, but if I show kindness to an enemy, then that's grace. We are enemies of God. "And God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet enemies, sinners, Christ died for us." The great demonstration of the grace of God is that center cross and what that illustrates out there.

Now, thank God for the starry skies. "The heavens declare the glory of God." But the cross demonstrates the grace of God. And if you're saved, you'll be saved by grace or you won't be saved at all, for the Bible says in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

This thief had absolutely nothing to boast about. Salvation is by grace. Salvation is not spelled D-O, and it's not spelled D-O-N- apostrophe T. Some people think that salvation is spelled DO—if you'll do this and do this and do this, you can be saved. You couldn't save yourself by your good works anymore than I could put my hands under my shoes and lift myself to the ceiling. You can't do it. And some people think that, they're saved if they don't do this. They quit smoking. They quit drinking. They quit cursing. They quit stealing. They think it's spelled DON'T, don't do this and don't do this and don't this, and don't do this. If you're a drunkard and you quit drinking and you don't get saved, you'll go to hell sober. And no way to be saved apart from the grace of God.

There was nothing else this man could do except turn to the Lord, and say, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." He saw Jesus Christ as the sinless Christ, as the sovereign Christ, as the saving Christ. And in a moment of faith, He said to the Lord Jesus, "Lord Jesus, remember me."

You can be a Buddhist without knowing Buddha. You can be a Confucianist without knowing Confucius. You can be a Muslim without knowing Mohammed. But you can't be a Christian without knowing Jesus. Being a Christian is not just simply facts about Jesus; it is a vital relationship with the living Christ when you turn to Him and you say to Him, if you would tonight, if you're listening through radio, or in this building, if you would say to Him tonight what this dying thief said, "Lord, Lord, remember me," and I can tell you, on the authority of the Word of God, that the Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

There are some people who believe you have to be baptized in order to be saved. If that's true, this thief went to hell. He didn't get baptized. No. It's amazing how some people will argue. They, they're diehards. They say, "Well, of course, that was, that man was saved before the death of Christ. Now after the death of Christ you have to be

baptized.” They make it harder to be saved before, after Jesus died than before Jesus died. But the truth of the matter is that that Jesus died before this man died. When they came to Jesus, He was already dead. They had to break this man’s legs in order for him to die. No. This man died this side of Calvary, but he was never baptized. And I want to tell you baptism, whether a spoonful or a tankful, can’t take away your sins. I believe in baptism, and I believe with all of my heart if you’ve given your heart to Jesus Christ, you ought to be baptized. And I believe with all of my heart that if that dying thief were in this building tonight and somehow had miraculously been delivered from that cross, he would beat you down this aisle, saying, “I want to follow my Lord in believer’s baptism. I’m not ashamed of the One who suffered, bled, and died for me.” I’m not opposed to baptism, but I’m telling you that salvation is by grace, and this teaches it. Romans 11:6: “And if by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. And if by works, it’s no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work.” You can’t mix grace and works together. This man was saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. The Future That Confronted Him**

Now, the final thing. We’re just talking about the three crosses, and we’re talking, primarily, about this thief, this dying thief. I want you to see the future that confronted him. Look, if you will, now in verse 43: “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Now that’s also a wonderful theology that this thief learned or already knew. This man, for a moment of faith, was given more in an instant than he’d ever stolen. He was given eternal life. And, and Jesus said, “You have it right away.” You will hear me say when I give an invitation, “If you will receive Jesus Christ, He will save you radically, dramatically, instantaneously, and eternally.” That’s the salvation that we have because Jesus paid it all. This man went straight to heaven from a bloody cross—immediately. Jesus said, “Today you’ll be with me in paradise.”

Now there are some people who believe that the soul sleeps in the grave, along with the body, until the resurrection. That is not so. The Bible teaches there comes a time when we’re absent from the body and present with the Lord. Put in your margin 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 8. Paul said, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” And Paul, when he was in a Philippian jail thinking that perhaps, they would execute him, said in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 23, wondering whether he’s going to live or die, he said, “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” The minute a child of God dies, whether they be a thief on a cross or a child in our Sunday school, that moment, instantaneously, that person goes straight to heaven. Jesus said, “Today you’ll be with me in paradise.”

In London, England, there's a tombstone that has an unusual epitaph. There was a man named Solomon Peas, P-E-A-S, an unusual name. And he gave instructions that he wanted this epitaph put on this tombstone, and I want you to listen to it.

Beneath these clouds and beneath these trees

Lies the body of Solomon Peas.

This is not Peas; it only the pod,

Peas shelled out and went to God.

I like that. The old pod will go into the ground, but the real person, the soul—you see, the body of that thief is moldering in the grave today, turned to rust and dust, mold and corruption, but his spirit is now with Jesus in paradise, right not. And all he did was say, "Lord, remember me," and Jesus saved him. Friend, if that isn't grace, I don't know what is grace. What a wonderful, wonderful salvation we have—to go immediately to be with the Lord.

There was an airplane flying to Denver, Colorado, and got into a tremendous storm. It was bumping around, and so forth; I mean, not just turbulence, but dangerous turbulence. It looked like they might go down. And there was a lady sitting on that plane and she was humming hymns. The man sitting next to her looked at her, and said, "Lady, you seem so calm. What is it that gives you this peace? Don't you know that we're just about to perish, at least perhaps?" She said, "Well, I'm not particularly concerned about it." He said, "Well, why not?" "Well," she said, "I'm on this plane to go visit my daughter who lives in Denver." But she said, "Recently I had a daughter who dies and is in heaven right now," and she said, "It really doesn't make much difference to me which daughter I visit today." I like that. "It really doesn't make that much difference to me." See, to live is Christ and to die is gain. "And this day you'll be with me in paradise." For a moment of faith—an eternity.

## Conclusion

Now let me just wrap this up and say this: This is what we would call a deathbed repentance, and a wise person has said that God gave us one of these that no one need despair, but only one in the Scripture that none need presume. You see, deathbed repentance is very possible, but not very probable. The wisest thing that anybody could do would be to give their hearts to Jesus today, for the Bible says, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

There were two thieves on the crosses that day; a thief who received and a thief who rejected. One is in heaven and one is in hell. What was the difference? Well, I personally believe that God gives man a will, and man can say yes, or a man can say no. I believe the other thief could have been saved had he called upon the Lord, for the

Bible says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

There’s a story that preachers tell about a wise man who seemed to have the answer to everything. They would ask the wise man a question and he always had a wise answer. So they said, “We’re going to trick the old man.” And they found a small bird, caught him, put the bird in their hands, and made it obvious there was a bird. Let a little feathers stick out of the hand. And they came to the old man. They thought they would trick him. And they were going to ask him a question: “Is this bird dead or alive?” Now if the old man said, “The bird is dead,” they would open their hands and let him fly away. But if they said, if he said, “The bird is alive,” they would crush him and then open their hands and show a dead bird. They thought they would just have some fun with the old man. But he was smarter than they. They came up to him with that bird in their hand and said, “Sir, we have a question for you. What do you think I have in my hand?” “Well,” he said, “you have a bird in your hand.” “You’re right. Now here’s a question. Old man, is the bird dead or alive?” He looked at them with a smile on his face and said, “The answer to that question is in your hands.”

Are you dead or alive? The answer to that question is in your hands. One thief said yes; the other said no. It’s up to you. Jesus died for you. “For whosoever will call upon the name of Lord will be saved.” And you can be saved instantaneously, radically, dramatically, and eternally if you, by faith, will put your faith where God put your sins—on Jesus.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And if you’re already saved, begin to pray for those round about you. And if you’re not saved, I want to guide you in a prayer. And in this prayer tonight you can receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Would you pray like this: Dear God, like that dying thief, I know that I am a sinner. Like that dying thief, I know that I am condemned by my sin. Lord, I fear Your judgment tonight. I fear You because You’re a righteous and a holy God. But, Lord, I know that You love me also, and I know that You sent Jesus to die for me. I believe that He is the sinless, sovereign, saving Son of God. I believe that. And now tonight, Lord, like a dying thief, I want to say, “Lord, remember me.” Come into my heart. Forgive me. Save me, Lord Jesus.

Did you ask Him? Then thank Him for doing it by sheer faith. Don’t look for a feeling. Stand on His Word. Thank You for saving me. And now, Lord Jesus, I turn from sin to follow You all of my life. I’m weak, but You’re strong. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. I will follow You all the days of my life not in order to be saved, but because I am saved. I will live for You. I will not be ashamed of You if You’ll only help me. Thank You, Lord Jesus, my Lord and my Savior. In your name I pray. Amen.

# Sound Theology

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 3, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Luke 23:33**

*“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.”*

LUKE 23:33

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Dying Thief's Theology of Sin: The Failure That Condemned Him
- II. The Dying Thief's Theology of God: The Fear That Convicted Him
- III. The Dying Thief's Theology of Jesus: The Faith That Converted Him
  - A. He Saw That Jesus Was the Sinless Christ
  - B. He Saw That Jesus Was the Sovereign Christ
  - C. He Saw That Jesus Was the Saving Christ
- IV. The Dying Thief's Theology of Heaven: The Future That Confronted Him

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find Luke chapter 23. And when you've found it, look up here for just a moment. Luke chapter 23. I don't know about you, but I'm a connoisseur of the comic strips. I read the comic strips. And I have a few that I especially read, and I have some that I never read. One of those that's one of the better comic strips, I think, is Peanuts. And, you know, that's written by Charles Schultz who professes faith in Christ. And in one particular incident, it was raining and raining and raining and raining. And Lucy and Linus are looking out the window. And it was a thunderstorm. And Lucy says, "I hope it doesn't rain so much that the entire world is flooded." And Linus says to Lucy, "Now, Lucy, don't worry. In Genesis chapter 9, verses 13 and 14, God promised that He would never send a flood to destroy the world again. And as proof of that, He put a rainbow in the sky." Well, Lucy sighed and said, "That sure makes me feel a lot better." And Linus said, "Well, sound theology has a way of doing that."

Now, sound theology does have a way of making you feel better. And I want to talk to you tonight about some sound theology because there's an awful lot of unsound theology in the world today. I, I subscribe to U.S. News and World Report. And this is

the latest U.S. News and World Report. Here is an article in here called, “Culture and Ideas.” And the title of this article is “Bob Funks, F-U-N-K-S, Funks Radical Reformation Roadshow.” The sub-title, “Taking a Controversial Gospel to the People.” Then this, this article is about something called The Jesus Seminar, where a group of so-called Bible scholars have set about to re-discover the real Jesus and to tell us what Jesus said and what He did not say in contradistinction to what the Bible says He said. And I’ll read you just a few paragraph of this. “For twelve years a notorious band of Bible scholars—and, by the way, that is an oxymoron if I ever heard one right here—a notorious band of Bible scholars has riled the religious community by declaring that Jesus Christ is grossly misquoted and misrepresented in the gospels. Now the Jesus Seminar is—now that Jesus Seminar is taking its controversial message on the road, dispatching teams of scholars to conduct public forums throughout the country.” Now not are they, they’re not content to wallow in their blasphemous disbelief; now they’ve got to become Satan’s evangelists, so they’re taking this, show to the country. “The goal, says Robert Funk—I like that name, Funk—the seminar’s founder and head of the West Star Institute in Santa Rosa, California, is to raise the public literacy level, disseminating knowledge, he says, that has been hoarded by scholars for years. It is time, Funk says, to set Jesus free from the scriptural and creedal and experiential prisons in which we have incarcerated Him.” And, skipping ahead: “Applying both conventional methods of text analysis and other more disputed rules of evidence, the seminar scholars eventually concluded that no more than 20% of the sayings, and even fewer of the deeds attributed to Jesus in the New Testament gospels, are authentic. Among the castoffs are the Lord’s prayer, the sayings of Jesus on the cross, and His claims to divinity, the virgin birth, most of Jesus’ miracles, and His bodily resurrection.” Skipping forward again. “This new Christianity, says Funk, would, among other things, emphasize Jesus as a teacher rather than a divine being. It would replace the Eucharist with a common meal, emphasize forgiveness and freedom over punishment and piety—now listen to this—and endorse protected recreational sex among consenting adults.”

Methinks we’re getting closer to the bottom line right now. As a matter of fact, when you study the Book of Jude, you’ll almost always find that, sexual immorality and apostasy are inextricably interwoven. So here’s this, what they call a Jesus Seminar turned into a road show. And these men call themselves scholars. They are examining the Bible. I think they ought to be examined. To trust these fellows, this bunch, to examine the Bible—I’d just as soon trust a, a group of blind men with a jug full of lightening bugs to go out and examine the noonday sun, as these men to examine the Word of God. Well, we’re living in a day where we are amazed at what men not only do not believe, but what they will believe. So I want to talk to you tonight about sound theology. And our theological professor tonight is going to be a thief.

Now I'm not talking about me, but I'm talking about a man here in the Word of God. We're going to learn the theology of a thief. And you're going to find out that a man dying on the cross had a far better theology than some so-called theologians today. Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 23 and verse 33: "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors—now the word malefactor is just a high-faluting word for wrongdoers, sinners—one on the right hand, and the other on the left." So on the hill of Calvary that day there were at least three crosses, three men that are there in agony and blood. And then, go on down to verse 39: "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man—talking of Jesus—hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Three crosses there that day. And, Jesus who was dying for the sin of the world. On one side was a thief, a malefactor. On the other side was a thief, a malefactor. One turned to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked for forgiveness and received it and was saved. The other looked at the Lord Jesus, railed upon Him, ridiculed Him, perhaps cursed Him, and died in his sin. Three were dying that day. One, therefore, was a dying Savior. The other was a dying sinner. And the third was a dying saint. I want us to think about that dying saint, that one who turned to the Lord Jesus, and he prayed this prayer, this wonderful prayer, when he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Use a little imagination. Crucifixion was indescribably horrible, gruesome. What it was meant to do was to put so much fear in the hearts of the populace when they saw someone crucified that they would swear to themselves that this would never happen to them. This was the way of keeping the people in line. It was the most excruciating form of execution that a twisted, tormented mind could devise. And so, here are these men there. Jesus; we picture Him in the middle. We picture the thief who rejected Him on one side, the one who ridiculed Him and cast slander at Him. We picture the other thief over here on the right hand side of the Lord Jesus. And I want you to see him there with his gaping wounds. I want you to feel as you can the throbbing pain, where every nerve in his body is a highway for the footprints of pain. Perhaps he's nauseous. He is almost in shock. There are flies in his gaping wounds. His body is dehydrated. His tongue is swollen. He can hardly turn his head. But he looks to Jesus and he says, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus, in agony and blood, takes time from dying to turn to this man, and Jesus said, "Verily—that means you can

bank on it—I say to you, today you'll be with me in paradise.”

Now that's the background for the study. And I want us to see the theology that this man had, this dying thief, that caused him to say what he said to the Lord Jesus. And I want you to see the result of that kind of theology.

## **I. The Dying Thief's Theology of Sin: The Failure That Condemned Him**

First of all, I want you to see this man's theology of sin and the failure that condemned him—his theology of sin. Look in verse 39. And he said, “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justify; for we receive the due reward of our deeds...” This man knew that sin brought punishment. This man knew that he was a sinner, and he knew that his sin received, deserved, and received judgment.

Now I want to say this: that all good theology, all good theology has a proper understanding of sin. If you don't have a proper understanding of sin, your theology is going to be skewed because you, if you make a wrong diagnosis, it will follow as night follows day that you will never have the right and the proper cure. This man had a theology of sin and he knew the faults, the failures that condemned him. And that's the reason he cried out to God for mercy. Many people will never get saved because they will never accept the fact that they are a sinner. Yet the Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

You say, “Well, Pastor, I've never sinned like this man sinned.” Folks, it's, it's not the amount of sin that condemns you; it's the fact of sin. As a matter of fact, you don't have to drink a whole bottle of poison to die. You don't have to be in 90 feet of water to drown. You can drown in 9 feet of water. The Bible says, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

I read somewhere of a woman who was in jail services. As Brother Al Alexander said, he goes to the prisons. He told us this morning. This woman was witnessing from cell to cell. And many people were, saying how, how they should not have been there, and how they were framed or how they were, thereby, unfortunate circumstances, or how, what they did was only a mistake, a misjudgment. One man said to this lady, “I am such a wicked, such a wicked sinner.” She said, “Thank God.” He said, “No, lady. I said I'm such a wicked sinner.” She said, “Thank God.” He said, “Lady, are you mocking me? Are you making fun of me?” She said, “No, indeed.” She said, “Now you're ready to be saved. That's why I'm thanking God.” You have to understand that you're a sinner. And this man said, “I am suffering for my sin. I justly, I am under condemnation.”

So the very first thing that I see in this man's theology, that is so different from Mr. Funk's theology, is that he recognized sin for what it was. He recognized that, "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. The wages of sin is death." And, you see, you'll not get saved until you know this, because the Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 15: "For this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save what? Sinners! Now if you're not a sinner, you can't get saved. Of course, you are a sinner. But you must admit that you're a sinner. There's none so good he need not be saved and none so bad he cannot be saved.

## **II. The Dying Thief's Theology of God: The Fear That Convicted Him**

Now here's the second theology I want you to see. Not only do you see his theology of sin and the failure that condemned him. But I want you to see his theology of God and the fear that convicted him. Look in verse 40: "But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God..." Now a good theology not only sees sin for what it is, but it sees God for who He is. And He is a holy God who will punish sin. A healthy fear of a holy God is the beginning of knowledge.

Now when we talk about the fear of God, what do we mean by the fear of God? Does that mean that we dread God? No. An electrician has a fear of electricity. Now it doesn't mean that he dreads electricity, but he knows that when he's handling those wires, he must be careful or he can kill himself. A pilot has a respect for the power of gravity. Jim Glover, an erstwhile pilot in our church, told me, "Pastor," he said, "there are two kinds of pilots. There are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots."

Now what did he mean by that? He meant that you have a healthy respect of gravity. No pilot that I know of fears gravity, but he knows that it can destroy him. I have a respect for the Tennessee Highway Patrol. Now when I'm going down the road, I see that car. I do what you do. I look at the speedometer, you know, to check and see if, I have somehow transgressed. Now when I see a policeman, I don't quake and tremble because I, I have a, a pure conscience in, in that arena, in that area. But I can tell you one thing—that I have a healthy respect for the law. A. W. Tozer said this: "That the fear of God is love on its knees." And he said this—and listen to me. "No one can know the true grace of God who has not first known the fear of God. No one can know the true grace of God, the true grace of God, the true grace of God who has not first known the fear of God."

Do you know what bothers me about our generation? The one thing that we are missing most in America is the fear of God. That is gone in America. Now the Apostle Paul described a generation like this in Romans 3, verse 18 when he said, "There is no

fear of God before their eyes.” And yet, if you’re not a Christian, if you’re like this dying thief, you have so much to fear. I hear people say, “Well, I don’t believe in using fear in religion.”

Do you know why you don’t believe that? Because you think you’re smarter than Jesus. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10, verse 28: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Listen to what the psalmist said in Psalm 147, verse 11: “The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him in those that hope in his mercy.” I had rather frighten you into heaven than to lull you into hell. The fear of the Lord, love on its knees, is the beginning of wisdom.

### **III. The Dying Thief’s Theology of Jesus: The Faith That Converted Him**

Now what was the theology of this dying thief? He had a theology of sin. He saw the faults that condemn him. He had a theology of God, and he had a fear that convicted him. I want you to see his theology of Jesus. Look, if you will, now in verses 41 and 42. And he says, “ And we suffer justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds—but now notice what he says about Jesus—but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” What was his theology of Christ?

#### **A. He Saw That Jesus Was the Sinless Christ**

First of all, he saw that Jesus was the sinless Christ. He said of the Lord Jesus Christ, “...this man hath done nothing amiss.” Now I don’t know where he learned about Jesus, I really don’t. Maybe when he was a child, his mother taught him the Old Testament prophecies. I don’t know. Maybe he heard Jesus preach and teach. I don’t know. Maybe he saw the way that Jesus reacted when the soldiers buffeted Him and when He was abused and misused. I don’t know, but maybe Jesus had had a conversation with him on the way to the cross. I don’t know how he got this knowledge. The Bible doesn’t tell us. But I know that he had it! He knew that Jesus Christ had never sinned. He said, “...this man hath done nothing amiss.” Phillips’ translation gives it this way: “...this man never did anything wrong in his life.”

That’s very important, because, as I told you this morning, a sinner could save no one. Only a holy Savior can save. And 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21, the Bible says of the Lord Jesus, “For God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be the righteousness of God in him.” Hebrews 4, verse 15: “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” First Peter 2, verse 22. It speaks of Jesus, “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

These people in this Jesus seminar want to make Jesus just another sinner. They want to give Jesus a human birth like we had. They want to look at all the faults, the failures, and the foibles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, Jesus could look right at His enemies and could say, “Which of you can convict me of sin?” I wouldn’t ask my friends that question, much less my enemies. But Jesus in John 8, verse 46: “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” His sinlessness meant that He was the Son of God.

Now, you know, the Jehovah’s Witnesses tell us today that Jesus is not God. Well, now, wait a minute. Was Jesus sinless? Ask a Jehovah’s Witness if he believes that Jesus sinned. Jesus said, “There is none good but one, and that is God.” Now, friend, if Jesus is not God, Jesus is not good. And if Jesus is good, Jesus is God, because there’s only one that’s good, and that’s God. And who said that? Jesus said that.

You see, there was the failure that condemned him. There was the fear that convicted him. And there was the faith that converted him. He saw that Jesus was the sinless Son of God.

### **B. He Saw That Jesus Was the Sovereign Christ**

But not only did he see that He was the sinless Christ; he saw that He was the sovereign Christ. Look in verse 42: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” This man may have had more faith than any man in the Bible. He may have had more faith than any man in the Bible. Can you imagine saying to a man on a cross, dying, saying, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom?” Why, he spoke of a kingdom. His only throne was a cross. He spoke of a kingdom. His crown was a crown of thorns. He spoke of a kingdom. His scepter was a nail driven into His quivering palm. He spoke of a kingdom, and the allegiance that the king was receiving was spit in His face. And yet, this man saw that He was the sinless Christ. He saw that He was the sovereign Christ. If He had a kingdom, it looked like it was shrinking to the narrow dimensions of a tomb. And yet, he calls Him Lord. “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” And notice he didn’t say, “If you come into your kingdom.” He said, “when.” He had a rock-solid faith that that man to whom he turned was absolutely, totally sinless, had never done anything wrong, and that His was the kingdom.

Now, folks, I submit that that was an incredible faith. And, I told you before, one of my favorite verses in all of the Bible is 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 15, which speaks of our Lord Jesus when He reigns, and it says, “Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.” They asked Him, those enemies who were casting stuff into His face, and, and that other thief said, “If You’re, if You’re the Messiah, if You’re the Christ, save Yourself and us too.” And those on the ground said, “Come down from the cross and we will, we’ll believe in You.” I’m glad He didn’t. There was one man that Jesus refused to save, and that was Jesus

Christ Himself. He stayed upon that cross. But as I told you this morning, you cannot be saved unless you confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Romans 10, verse 9 and 10: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

### **C. He Saw That Jesus Was the Saving Christ**

Now, listen, listen to this man’s faith. He saw Jesus as the sinless Christ. He saw Jesus as the sovereign Christ. And he saw Jesus as the saving Christ. Now this is an amazing thing. Here was a man. What was he? He was a sinner. The Bible calls him a malefactor. That is, a wrong doer. He is dying for his sin. And he comes to Jesus, turns to Jesus, and he calls upon the name of the Lord, and he says, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” And he knew that this sinless Christ and this sovereign Christ was a saving Christ. He’s crying out for salvation.

What a wonderful theology of salvation he had. I don’t know where he got it. I don’t know how he learned this because he didn’t deserve salvation. There was no way he could work for the Lord. There was nothing he could do. He couldn’t teach a Sunday school class. There’s no way that he could, from this point, obey the golden rule. There was no way that he could give his money. He had nothing to give. He’s nailed to a cross. He’s stripped naked. There’s no way that he could be baptized. All he can do is cry out for mercy. And the Bible says, as I preached this morning, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

And if anybody ever tells you that a man has to be baptized in order to be saved, just point him to this story. If baptism saves, whether a spoonful or a tankful, this man’s in hell because he didn’t get baptized. You know what they tell us? They say, “Oh well, that was the old dispensation. That was before the death of Jesus. Now after the death of Jesus, things are different.” They make it harder for you to get saved after Jesus died than it was before He died. But let me tell you, folks, Jesus died before this man died. When they came to break the legs of the people on the cross in order that they might not desecrate their Sabbath day, when they came to Jesus, He was already dead. This man died. He lived and he lived in this dispensation, the same dispensation that we’re in, and he was saved by grace.

Now listen to me very clearly and very plainly. Jesus is the sinner’s Savior, and He will save anybody, anytime, any place who will call upon Him. And that dying thief turned to Jesus and with faith he said, “Lord, remember me—not if, but—when you come into Your kingdom,” and Jesus saved him radically, dramatically, and eternally right there on the spot. And Jesus said, “Today, today, this very day will you be with me in paradise.” What grace that was. You see, what is grace? Let me give you a definition of grace. Grace is that quality of God’s nature that makes Him love undeserving sinners and saves them when they cannot save themselves. If you show kindness to a friend,

that is not grace. If you show kindness to a stranger, that is not grace. But when you show love and kindness to an enemy, that is grace. And that's what our Lord did, to this man on the cross. Romans chapter 5, verse 8: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The heavens declare the glory of God, but the cross displays the grace of God. And if you're going to be saved, you're going to be saved by grace or you won't be saved at all, for the Bible says in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." There was nothing that man could do except turn to Jesus and say, "Lord, remember me."

So what was his theology of sin and the fault that condemned him? He saw that he was a sinner—"The wages of sin is death." What was his theology of God and the fear that convicted him? He saw that God is a holy God and God is a God that needs to be feared. What is his, what was his theology of Christ and the faith that converted him? He saw that Christ was the sinless Christ. He saw that He was the sovereign Christ. He saw that He was the saving Christ. Turned to Him and prayed to Him, and said, "Lord, remember me when thou cometh into thy kingdom."

#### **IV. The Dying Thief's Theology of Heaven: The Future That Confronted Him**

One other thing I want you to see. I want you to see his theology of heaven and the future that comforted him. What was the future that comforted him? A place called heaven; a place called paradise. Jesus said to this man, "Today will you be with me in paradise." In a moment, this thief was given, for a moment of faith, more than he had stolen in all of his life. He was given eternal life. He went straight to heaven from the cross. He went straight to heaven from the cross.

Now we need to learn this: that when a child of God dies, he goes immediately to heaven. Jesus didn't say, "After the resurrection and several thousand years, you'll be with me in paradise." Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Now some people teach that, that the soul sleeps, as the body sleeps, and the soul goes into a state of suspended animation or something, until the resurrection, and then we awaken in the resurrection. That is not true. It is the body that sleeps, not the soul. The soul goes immediately into the presence of the Lord. And this thief somehow had learned that, too. Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 8. The Apostle Paul says, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

This past Friday, I stood at the side of my father's coffin. I looked in there at my father's form, and they'd done a good job on him. He was dressed nicely and his tie was nattily up under his neck. And, you know, you're always wondering, are they going to

make him look natural, and whatever? But he looked good. He looked like he was asleep and just about ready to smile. And I was pleased. And I told my mama, I said, “Mama, you’ll like, you’ll like what they’ve done. Daddy looks good. He looks very normal and very natural.” But, folks, I want to tell you something. There’s something about death that, and if you’ve done, as I’ve done, gone many times to funerals, and I’ve gone to so many; very few of my own family members, but I’ve gone to so many. But when you look at that house of clay, there’s something there that tells you that individual is, is not asleep. You know that the person has moved out, that, that what the person that was there is gone. And you just see that. You sense it. It’s not just merely psychological, though, that, that the real person is absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Now that dying thief’s body is moldering in the grave. It’s turned to dust. Two thousand years have turned that body into absolute dust. You wouldn’t expect to find a modicum of that body; maybe an ossified bone or something somewhere, but that thief has been with Jesus in paradise for two thousand years. Jesus said, “Today you’ll be with me in paradise.”

That’s the reason the Apostle Paul, as he was thinking about—he didn’t know whether he was going to die or whether he was going to live. He was in prison. He thought, well, they may not execute me, but they may execute me. He said, “I’m in a quandary, a straight between two.” He said, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, but to remain here with you is necessary and needful.” He said, “I don’t know what I would choose. I want to continue my ministry, but I want to go to heaven.” But he said, “I am not worried about it. Philippians 1, verse 23: “For I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” He’s saying, “Hey,” Paul says, “it doesn’t bother me if I live, for to me to live is Christ; for me to die is gain.” You know what he was saying? “Heads, I win; tails, I win!” That’s what he’s saying. “Heads, I win. If I live, I will live with Jesus. If I die, I’m going to be with Christ. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Now you think about what Jesus told this man. I’m telling you, he went from a cross right to the streets of gold. One moment he’s dying in agony; the next moment he is leaping and dancing and praising God, face to face with the dear Savior in heaven. That’s a good gospel, isn’t it? That is a wonderful, wonderful gospel.

A lady was on an airplane. And, you know, have, have you ever been on one of these white-knuckle flights? I mean, it was one of those. And it was worse than that. I mean, they got in a thunderstorm, a bad one, where people were banged around and, and everything was in disarray in that storm. I’ve only been in, in a few of those, and, and I’ll tell you, I don’t care how saved you are. Your pulse will quicken when you get in one of those. And, this little lady was sitting there, though, and, while everybody else

was in, in terror, she was humming, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. O, what a foretaste of glory divine.” And when the plane finally did get on the ground in Denver, a passenger said, “Lady,” he said, “I need to talk with you.” Said, “I was terrified. And I looked at you, and you were so calm. I heard you, what you were humming. You were humming, ‘Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.’ Lady, I want to ask you a question. What gave you that joy?” You know what she said? She said, “Not many weeks ago I had a daughter to die, who’s gone to heaven.” And she said, “I’m flying out now to see my other daughter who lives in Denver.” And she said, “I was just thinking, I’m going to visit with one or the other of my daughters this afternoon.” Isn’t that great? “I’m just going be with one or the other of my daughters this afternoon.” For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Think of the theology that this man had: the theology of, of sin and the faults that condemned him. His theology of God and the fear that convicted him; his theology of Christ and the faith that converted him; his theology of the future and the future that comforted him. And I want to suggest, if I had to follow anybody, I’d much rather follow a thief than follow the bird that we read about in, in U.S. News and World Report. O God, get us back to the old-time religion. It’ll see us home to heaven.

## **Conclusion**

Now what does all of this mean to us? Well, let me just, let me just wrap it up for, for you, folks, and, and let’s see if we can have some concluding thoughts. First of all, don’t you depend upon a deathbed salvation, like this man did. You say, “Pastor, do you believe in deathbed repentance?” I thank God that it’s possible. Somebody has wisely said, “The Bible records one, this man, that no one may despair; but only one, that no one can be careless.” You don’t know when you’re going to die. My dad dropped dead, and from what I can understand, was probably dead when he hit the pavement. He didn’t have time to get right with God. He was right with God. And, let me say to you that you don’t know when you’re going to die. Tomorrow’s not promised to you. Tomorrow’s not promised to me. There were two thieves there that day: one was saved and the other was lost. One tonight is in paradise and one is in perdition—and both of them were just as close to the Lord Jesus Christ. In this congregation tonight, there’s some of you who I trust will trust Christ and be saved. And it grieves me to say that some of you who are lost may turn around and leave this building without being saved.

Years ago, I heard of a chaplain who was on the battlefield after a horrendous battle. A soldier had been mortally wounded. It was obvious that there was no way that the medics or anybody else could save him. The chaplain who had seen a case like this before found that boy out on the battlefield, got to him, and, cradled that boy’s head in his hands, and looked into that boy’s face and tried to give him some comfort. The boy,

knowing he'd been hit, not knowing the condition where actually his, his insides had been blown out, said to the chaplain, "Chaplain, will I live?" And the chaplain said, "Son, are you a Christian?" He said, "Chaplain, one of the happiest days of my life was, when as a 12-year old boy in my church, I walked down the aisle of my church, gave my hand to my pastor, and gave my heart to Jesus Christ. Yes, sir, chaplain, I'm a Christian." The chaplain looked into that boy's eyes, and said, "Son, you will live." "You will live." Jesus said, "He that lives and believes in me will never die." That's the theology of a thief, and it's good theology. Amen? Father, seal the message to our hearts we pray. In Jesus' name.

Now while heads are bowed. If you've never received the Lord Jesus, I want to tell you, I want to tell you that if Jesus saved that man on that cross so long ago when that man said, "Lord, remember me," I want to tell you and promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you and keep you saved if you will pray the same kind of prayer with the same kind of faith. If you believe that He is the sinless, the sovereign, and the saving Christ, if you believe that salvation is by grace, then why don't you trust Him tonight? Pray this prayer: Lord Jesus, I deserve judgment, but I need mercy. Lord Jesus, I believe that You are the sinless, sovereign, saving Christ. I believe You died on that cross for my sin. And now by faith I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Pray that prayer. Please pray it. Save me, save me, Jesus. Now pray this: Lord Jesus, thank You for saving me. I trust You to do it. I turn from all that I know to be wrong and I turn to You. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, I will make this public. I will not be ashamed of You because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# The Week After Easter

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 26, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Luke 24:13–36

*“And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.”*

LUKE 24:15

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Discouragement of a Confused Heart
  - II. The Discovery of a Challenged Heart
    - A. Jesus Sought Them
    - B. Jesus Caught Them
    - C. Jesus Taught Them
  - III. The Declaration of a Convinced Heart
- Conclusion

## Introduction

I want to talk to you about the week after Easter. And Luke chapter 24 deals with the week after Easter, and I think there's an incredible lesson for us here about a burning, blazing emotional, passionate love for Jesus Christ. There's nothing deader than dead orthodoxy, for a person who knows the Truth, who can cross every "T," dot every "I," but they can't spell victory.

This is what I want to talk to you about: How to have a passionate, burning, emotional love for Jesus. It's good to have everything right, but I think of a preacher who was preaching and did not use proper grammar as I sometimes fail to do. He was saying in this message, "I've seen this" and "I've seen that." You should be like pastor so-and-so who says correctly, "I have seen." And he thought about it, and he knew pastor so-and-so who had that dead orthodoxy, and he said, "Well, I'll tell you the truth, I'd rather say 'I seen' when I've seen something then to say 'I have seen' when I ain't seen nothing."

I want us to have a passionate love for Jesus Christ. The sign of Pentecost was a tongue of fire and we need to have a burning, passionate heart for Jesus.

Now let me give you the background. Jesus was crucified, put in that grave, came out of that grave, and was seen, but the disciples were convinced—some of them—but

some of them not totally, fully convinced. They were half-believing and half-doubting. Two of them had taken to a journey to a place called Emmaus. And I've been to Emmaus a number of times. It's a beautiful little village about 7 and one-half miles from the city of Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified, buried and raised. And they were trudging along, two forlorn disciples, discouraged and burdened.

Let's begin in verse 13, and you'll pick it up there in Luke chapter 24, verse 13, "And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs." That's seven, a little more than seven miles. "And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Now God did that on purpose and I'm going to tell you why in just a moment. "And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? "And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. "And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

## **I. The Discouragement of a Confused Heart**

Now, here they are—two of these disciples. And what I want to talk to you about first of all is I want you to see what I'm going to call the discouragement of a confused heart.

These people were discouraged, two of them. They're trudging along, half-believing, half-doubting. They've heard the story, but they were let down in body and in spirit, and Jesus could tell by their countenance that they were discouraged. They were sad. And we're going to see that their discouragement and their sadness had a source. It was a misunderstanding. And I want to talk a little bit about the misunderstanding in a moment. But that misunderstanding led to disappointment. And disappointment led to doubt and doubt led to discouragement. Now what was their misunderstanding? Well,

they had been looking for a political Messiah. They were hoping that Jesus would come and redeem Israel and it not happened. And notice if you will, verse 21, “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.”

Now obviously, they were looking for a political Messiah. They had been looking for a King, and now what had happened to the King, their King has nails for a scepter. He had a cross for a throne. And His Kingdom had contracted to the narrow confines of a tomb. What had happened to the Kingdom? The prophets had prophesied a kingdom. The poets had pictured a Kingdom. The angels had pronounced and announced a kingdom. And Jesus had preached the Kingdom. And they were saying, “Lord, this is wonderful—Messiah is here. Israel is going to be redeemed.”

And, it had not happened. What had happened to these people is that they did not know as Paul Harvey would have said, the “rest of the story.” They’d only seen part of the story, and they did not understand that Jesus was turning Calvary to Easter and Pentecost was coming. Just like sometimes we don’t understand when we’re going through our own Gethsemane and Calvary that He’s going to turn our hurts to a hallelujah and our Calvary to an Easter and our tears to pearls. We only see a part of the story.

I can remember when I was a little boy, running away from home. I was not even school-age, but I can remember it like yesterday. I came into the kitchen and my mother was baking a pie shell, just the shell. I knew they was baking a pie, I was too short to see up in the over. But I stood around and hung around in the kitchen till she took the pie shell out. I have never been as disappointed and angry in my life, I looked into that pie shell and there was no pie in there. And I thought either my mother was extremely mean or she had absolutely gone out of her mind. How could any woman, how could any mother bake such a pie with nothing but a shell?

I literally ran away from home. I’m serious. I can remember, I went a whole half block out the front door, I’d not even started school yet. Out the front door, down the street, pouting, murmuring to myself. I went an entire half block before I repented and turned around and came back home. And by then I had learned the rest of the story. That she was not finished with what she’s doing. Now these disciples were very much like that, it was only half done and they were sad because their sadness was rooted in misunderstanding and unbelief and Jesus actually called them fools, if you’ll look there in verse 25, it’s a very interesting verse where He says to them,

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

Now they believed part of what the prophets had spoken, but they did not believe it all—they did not understand it all. And so what you have here is what I want to call the discouragement of a confused heart. When we get confused, and we don’t understand

the Word of God, they can lead to discouragement. And I have met in my ministry so many Christians who get discouraged because they don't understand the Scriptures and they don't believe all that the prophets had spoken.

## **II. The Discovery of a Challenged Heart**

Now let's move from there and talk not only about the discouragement of a confused heart—these men were confused—but let's talk a little bit about the discovery of a challenged heart. Jesus meet them and He challenged them with the Word of God and I'm so grateful that He did. I want you to see how He did it.

### **A. Jesus Sought Them**

First of all, Jesus sought them. Look if you will in verse 15 of this same chapter, “And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near...”

And He's done that so many times to me and He's done that so many times to you. Jesus just caught up with them. He did not seek them out to condemn them, or even to condone them. But what He did seek them for was to claim them and to comfort them and just as the Lord Jesus sought us when we were lost—by the way, we didn't seek Him, He sought us—and we love Him because He first loved us.

Now these men evidently were already believers, although they were backslidden and discouraged. If Jesus would seek us when we were just out and out sinners, surely He will seek us when we're saved and away from Him, and every backslidden Christian is known and every confused Christian has found Jesus just seeking them.

### **B. Jesus Caught Them**

But not only did Jesus seek them, but He caught them. He sought them and He caught them. He drew near to them and I'm glad that He did.

I'm here to tell you this folks, that Jesus has never ever lost one of His sheep. Never. And it's not because we hold onto Him; He holds onto us. And He told us that in John chapter 17, verse 12,

“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name, and those that Thou gavest me, I have kept and none of them is lost.”

### **C. Jesus Taught Them**

So what He did, He sought them, He caught them, but here's the incredible thing—He taught them. And He opened the Scriptures to them and He opened their eyes. Look if you will in verse 27 and see what the Lord Jesus Christ did for them the week after Easter. Notice He says,

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither

they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. “

Now watch this. “And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.” Now first of all, in verse 32, we’re going to notice that He opened the Scriptures. Look in verse 32, “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” Underscore that, it’s so important! “Our hearts burned when He opened to us the Scriptures.” But it was not enough for Him to open the Scriptures. Go back up to verse 31, “And their eyes were open and they knew Him.”

Now, there are two things that the Lord has to open to us when we’re confused and discouraged. First of all, He has to open the Scriptures. And secondly, He has to open our eyes. Both are absolutely necessary. Light without sight is no good and sight without light is no good. It takes absolutely both. Now, why is it that God engineered it that they would not know Who He was? Evidently in His resurrected form there was something about His likeness that was changed because they had known Him, they had seen Him, yet they did not recognize Him. Why does the Bible say that this was “holdened from them” or kept from them?

Look in verse 16: “But their eyes were holdened that they did not know Him.” Now, that doesn’t necessarily mean that His form was changed, but something happened to them. God doesn’t let them recognize Him. God, in some way, distorts their vision. He does not give them cognition. Why did God do that? Why didn’t He say, “Look, here I am—Believe!” Why? Good question, glad you asked it. Jesus is getting ready to go to heaven and what He is doing now—the same thing, you and I need—we don’t have Jesus before us in physical form. We have the Word of God. What He is doing now is putting their dependence not upon His physical presence with them, but upon the Word of God. He’s opening to them the Word, He’s opening them the Bible, He’s opening to them the prophets and He is opening their eyes to see Him now, not after the flesh, but to see Him by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. You understand why He did this?

And so, now we’re seeing this transition. He’s going back to heaven, but He is leaving the Word and the written Word is what we have today to bring Jesus Christ to us and to make Jesus Christ real to us. It is significant that it was the Word and not the physical sense that made Him real to them.

They didn’t say, “Oh yes, we recognize Him. That was really Him. We saw Him!” No. They said, “we knew Him because He opened the Word to us.” That’s how they knew Him. They knew Him now through the Word of God.

Now, He challenged them through the Word of God. I want you to see how He

challenged them. I want you to notice the sermon that He gave to them. The method was to open the Scriptures and open their eyes. Now notice the message. Look if you will in verse 27, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets...” Now that’s just the Old Testament way of saying Moses and the Prophets—the first five books of the Bible written by Moses and then the prophets, that’s just the way He speaks of a major portion of the Old Testament. So He’s just saying, “Going back to Genesis 1:1,” that’s what that says. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Now look at it carefully. It doesn’t say “He expounded to them all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures.” Now that would have been fine, but that’s not what it says. It says “He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Now what does that mean? It means that Jesus is in all the Scriptures, and not that He is in some of the Scriptures—not all of the things in the Scriptures—but in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself. The New Testament had not yet been written, so He started in Genesis—that’s Moses, Genesis, Exodus, then Deuteronomy—and then He just continues in Moses and in the prophets to speak to them from the Scriptures. What are the Scriptures about? Well, the things concerning Himself.

Now if you read the Bible and you don’t find Jesus, you missed it. Go back! Standing somewhere in the shadows you will find Jesus, He’ll be there in prophecy, He’ll be there in precept, He’ll be there in parable, He’ll be there in poetry, He’ll be there somehow. Jesus is there in the Bible and He Himself said and challenged the people of His day when He was talking about the Old Testament, “Search the Scriptures, for these are they which testify of me.” I’ve been preaching long enough to know that the Bible becomes a wonderful book to you when you find Jesus in it. Whether it’s the Old Testament or the New Testament, you find Jesus somewhere and really, there’s no lasting joy without Jesus and He is the One that you need and God has engineered that you’re not going to have joy without Jesus and you’re not going to know Jesus really apart from the Scriptures.

Too many people are writing Dear Abby when they ought to be opening their Bible and reading, finding out what is in the Word of God. Now, He’s walking with them. They’re on the Road to Emmaus. That’s about seven and a half miles, so how long would it take them to walk seven and a half miles? How long? Two hours? Two hours. So it’s a two hour Bible conference, maybe they stopped a little bit. Three hours. Two hours. Whatever. All the way now He’s opening to them the Scriptures. How would you like to have a tape recording of that? That seven mile Bible Conference. I would love to have a tape recording of that, of Jesus starting in the Book of Genesis and going through the Old Testament and saying, “Here’s Jesus. Here’s the Messiah. Here’s the

Messiah. Here I am,” but He didn’t say “Here I am” because at that moment they still didn’t realize who He was when He was talking about Himself. All of the Scripture is about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fulfilled prophecy is such a wonderful thing. Did you know that there over 333 precise details prophesying Jesus in the Old Testament? Centuries before Jesus was born, His birth, His career, His teaching, His suffering, His resurrection, His glory, His ascension, His Second Coming, that was all prophesied. Now don’t take that for granted. Jesus is the only person ever born in this world Whose ancestry, Whose birth-time, Whose forerunner, Whose birthplace, Whose birth-manner, Whose infancy, Whose manhood, Whose teaching, Whose character, Whose preaching, Whose reception, Whose rejection, Whose death, Whose burial, Whose resurrection, Whose ascension, were all written in a marvelous way before He was born.

Don’t pass by that. Can you image anybody—a painting, a picture of an individual—having never seen that individual, him having never been born and pain that picture and striking in unmistakable detail. But then can you imagine not one person, but twenty-five artists participating in the same picture, and then when that individual comes there is that exact likeness.

Peter Stoner is a mathematician and a statistician who has written in a Book called “Science Speaks.” And he talks about the law of probabilities. We’re talking about all of the things concerning Jesus in the Old Testament. Peter Stoner as a mathematician deals with a science called the law of probabilities. And he takes not 333 of these prophecies, he takes eight of them—only eight—and then he shows the mathematical probability of all eight—only eight—being fulfilled by chance. And here is the chance. It is one in ten raised to the seventeenth power. Well, you say, “I know exactly what that number is.” No you don’t. I don’t even know what it means. Just picture a ten with zeros going all the way over to the wall. All right.

He’s saying that one in ten raised to the seventeenth power. Now, we can’t get our mind on that, so Peter Stoner gives an illustration. He says if you were to take the state of Texas and cover the state of Texas with silver dollars—two feet thick—from border to border. Texans would like that! There are silver dollars this high just as far as you can go. One time I drove across Texas from one side to the other. If you’ve ever done that, friend, that is a drive—to drive all the way across Texas—and I was going in a straight line in only one direction, I didn’t go both directions and criss-cross. So here’s the state of Texas covered with silver dollars.

Then he said, if you were to mark just one of those silver dollars and stir them all up. Mark one specially and then blindfold a man and drop him into Texas from a helicopter—parachute him in—and let him search through all those silver dollars, and if he by chance, finds that one silver dollar of the entire state of Texas being covered with

silver dollars, that's the kind of probability we're talking about of just eight of these prophecies being fulfilled, out of 333 of them. We're not talking about 333; just eight. The law of probability makes these Scriptures fulfilled in the Lord Jesus impossible to have been fulfilled apart from chance.

I've often used this illustration. Joyce and I speak almost every week with our children in Spain by telephone. Now there are about six billion people on the face of the earth, not all of them have telephones. But let's say that all of them did have a telephone. And I wanted to contact David and I don't know his number. I don't know the number of his country—the overseas number. Nor do I know the area code where he lives. Nor do I know the digits in his personal number. Now suppose I pick up the phone and began to dial some numbers at random. Do you think the probability is that I'm going to reach David? Just pick it up, dial any numbers, and do you think he's going to say, "Hello, Daddy!" David—out of six billion people upon the face of the earth. Do you think that's going to happen? What are the chances? What is the probability that I would get every number right in a complicated phone number?

Well let me tell you how we're going to dial Jesus. All right. If you were to start, for example, in the Book of Genesis, you're going to find out that Jesus the Messiah is going to come from a certain race.

Genesis 3, verse 15, says He's going to be the seed of a woman. So right away we know it's not some angel or some other creature who is going to redeem us. So we dial the first number correct. And then we get to Genesis 9, the descendants that have come out of the ark, and we know that Jesus is going to be a descendant of Shem, a Shemmite or a Semite. So we have that here is the Messiah, He's going to be of a race and then He's going to come from a section of that race. Not all the peoples of the world are going to bring the Messiah. Now wait a minute, we've got to dial the next number. And He's going to come out of a nation of that section of that race, so we read in Genesis 12 that He's going to be a descendant of Abraham. But then we find out that Abraham has a number of descendants, so there has to be a tribe of that nation of that section of that race. That Messiah now has to come from the Tribe of Judah. But we haven't got all of the numbers yet, so we have to dial another number because He's going to come from a family of that tribe of that nation of that section of that race, and He's got to be of the house of Jesse. But we're not finished yet, we've got to dial another number. Not all of the descendants of Jesse, but there has to be a particular woman. Isaiah chapter 7 says she is a virgin. So you've got a virgin from that family from that tribe from that nation from that section from that race. But not just any woman; she has to be a virgin and not just a virgin in any place, but she has to be a virgin in Bethlehem of that woman of that family of that tribe of that nation of that section of that race. And she has to give birth to a baby, but not just at any time, she has to give birth

to a baby at a specific time prophesied by the prophet Daniel in Daniel chapter 9. And so if you just keep dialing these numbers, just this many, and pick up the phone, and on the other end is Jesus, the Son of God.

Now you think that just happens? Do you think that just happens? No. You see, the Scriptures—when Jesus took the Bible and He opened the Bible and began to show them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself—He’s willing to open the Scriptures to us and He opens the Scriptures and He opens our eyes. Now, let me just before I pass onto the third and final thing, I want to tell you that the prophecies concerning the Second Coming of Jesus are going to be fulfilled just as literally as those concerning His first coming. Same Bible. Many missed the blessing of His first coming because did not understand the Scriptures or they did not believe them: “Oh fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

Now I don’t want to hurt your feelings, but there’s something wrong with your mind and something wrong with your heart if you don’t believe the Bible. And Jesus would say to you, you’re foolish and your heart is very slow if you don’t understand the Scripture. The world is not through with Jesus but I’m going to tell you something, but this world is through without Jesus. He is coming again.

### **III. The Declaration of a Convinced Heart**

Now we’ve talked about the discouragement of a confused heart. We’ve talked about the challenge of a confronted heart. And now, I want you to think about the declaration of a convinced heart. Notice what happened to these people. Look if you will in verse 28 now. After Jesus had been with them, “And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him...”

Do you know most of us have about all of God we want? Most of us have about all of God we want. If we don’t have anymore it’s because we don’t want anymore. There are many times in the Bible where our Lord looks like He wants to get away from us. When Jacob was wrestling with the angel, the angel said, “Let me go.” Well good night, you know that Jacob couldn’t have held onto an angel if the angel really wanted to get away; the fight was fixed. The angel said, “Let me go.” Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” That’s just what the angel wanted to hear.

So many times the Lord likes He doesn’t care. A Syro-Phoenecian woman had a demon-possessed daughter. She said, “Master, do something for my daughter.” Jesus said, “I just come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I can’t take children’s bread and give it to dogs.” Can you imagine him speaking that way? She said, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs get the crumbs.” He said, “Woman, great is your faith.” Great is your faith. There are so many times it seems as if the Lord is trying to get away, but He really

wants us to do is press on and we have about all of God we want. “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” And so in verse 29, they constrained him, “...saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” He was glad they said that. “And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.” They’d seen Him do that before, I’m sure. “And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? “And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.” And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”

Well I want to stop right there. These disciples are now gathered together and they’re talking about these things. Cleophas and the other disciples talk and they come to a new conclusion and here’s the conclusion that I want you to come to, and I want Adrian to come to. I don’t want you to the conclusion tonight that Jesus is risen. I believe we’re about one hundred percent on that. The conclusion I want you to come to tonight is that He has risen indeed. Not He has risen. That’s one thing. But they said, “Hey, it’s real! It is real. The Lord is risen indeed!” And they immediately went back to Jerusalem with this news to shout it, to tell it, to sing it, to share it, and you might as well have told the sun not to shine as to tell these people not to witness about a risen Savior.

## **Conclusion**

You know what I think most of us in this room need? We need to have our eyes opened because the Bible has been opened, our hearts need to be set aflame and we don’t need a dead orthodoxy. We need a living faith. He is risen indeed! Amen? Father, bring the message to our hearts and may we, dear Lord, see You no longer with the eyes of the flesh, but Lord with the spiritual eyes. That You open the Scriptures, open our eyes, open our hearts to Your Truth. Thank You, Lord, that You’ve given us the Word and continue to show us in all the Scriptures the things concerning Yourself. Amen.